

# A New Era of Book Publishing at the Society of American Archivists

## Envisioning the Future

Imagine what the future of book publishing in the Society of American Archivists might look like from the point of view of Tamika Hall, a student entering Big State University's graduate archives program and a prospective member of its 2020 graduating class.

As an aspiring archivist, Tamika joins an SAA student chapter at the urging of her faculty advisor, Dr. Marie Jones. A long-time archivist and archival educator, Dr. Jones knows that SAA publications will play a key role in Tamika's development. Dr. Jones is especially excited about a new service the SAA Publications Board recently launched: NextLibris.

NextLibris provides flexible and instantaneous online access to the complete catalog of SAA books—past and presents—approximately 125 titles. Tamika will access these books in a responsive, accessible, and user-centered website, using the web-browser of her choice. Each of SAA's books can be located, retrieved, navigated, read, annotated, and discussed with other students and professionals, using an access system that makes it easy to interact with long-form texts.

Tamika logs into the service with her SAA credentials. This is a one-time step on each device she uses while engaging with the books, whether that device is a smartphone, a tablet, a laptop, a desktop computer, or some future technology. Since the books are stored on a remote computer and made available to devices via HTML, Tamika won't need any special software or key to access the content. She can even read cached copies offline, for those rare instances when she can't find an internet connection.

From the homepage of NextLibris, Tamika quickly finds the book she needs to complete her first assignment: Tom Nesmith's *Introducing Archives and Manuscripts* from the Archival Fundamentals Series III. Navigating easily to the first chapter, Tamika notices that the software uses a screen-friendly font, adjusts the page margins to a comfortable reading width, and provides her a means to annotate and highlight the text. The interface includes a citation generator and a way to load citations to her citation manager, so she can easily cite and use the work in her paper without worrying about whether she might be plagiarizing something.

Should Tamika wish to adjust any of her reading and writing preferences, she can easily do so from the settings menu. This allows her to set both master and device-specific settings.

After she finishes reading the chapter in *Introducing Archives and Manuscripts*, she puts the book on her virtual bookshelf, so she can easily locate it again for next week's assignment, which involves reading the next two chapters.

The following week the instructor of her introductory seminar, Dr. Richard Hunt, assigns Tamika and two of her classmates to read the three modules in *Appraisal and Acquisition Strategies*, a new work in the SAA series Trends in Archives Practice Series. Tamika's group has been charged with writing a summary and assessment of this work and then uploading it to the virtual classroom space in a course management system. At the next class, her 18 coursemates will read, discuss, and debate assessments of *Appraisal and Acquisition Strategies* along with five other books whose assessments will be prepared by other student groups.

Tamika is relieved that she does not need to buy another textbook or worry about retrieving the Library's print copy or e-text. Instead, she returns to NextLibris. She searches by author and loads Geof Huth's module from Trends in Archives Practice, *Appraising Digital Archives*. Tamika immediately notices that she can quickly and effortlessly browse through this volume by using the integrated table of contents and search features. These can be docked at the left, bottom, or right of her screen, and can be hidden from view as needed.

After reading a few pages, she discovers the highlight pen, which allows her to mark an important passage in the color of her choice. A few days later, she is even more pleased when she notices that the highlights are still active—even though she didn't click anything to save them and is now using a different device.

Even better, she has discovered that she can annotate passages and even share her comments and questions with the two other members of her group—or anyone who has access to the book.<sup>1</sup> Working together, her teammates compare notes, write their summary, and prepare for a rich discussion of archival appraisal, a task facilitated by the features available in NextLibris but not available to those who were assigned non-SAA titles.

While Tamika uses NextLibris frequently during graduate school and subsequently as an archivist, she also likes the unbeatable usability and permanence of a high-quality printed book. For this reason, she'll click on the "Buy Print Now" button in NextLibris throughout her career as she builds a professional library of print books.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Jones, Dr. Hunt, and their colleagues frequently assign readings from SAA resources because they know the service provided by NextLibris is a good value, contains peer-vetted content, and is easy to use. They don't need to worry about placing titles on reserve or violating copyright. They are more than willing to pay a small premium on their SAA membership dues, knowing it supports a rich student experience and that the SAA books are well written, edited, and designed. Even better—NextLibris provides them an outlet for their own research and scholarship, one that is particularly attractive because they know the resources are highly used in an accessible interface. Libraries and other institutions can subscribe to it at a reasonable

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<sup>1</sup> This is a feature provided by the hypothes.is service.

<sup>2</sup> For non-SAA members or subscribers, the service will provide limited access to content, with the ability to buy access to specific works in electronic or print format.

cost, spreading the burden and making the books widely available even to non-SAA members enrolled at a participating institution.

Tamika, Dr. Jones, and Dr. Hunt may not be aware of other aspects of NextLibris. These include features that enhance the service's utility and ensure its long-term vitality. For example, NextLibris was developed and is hosted in partnership with a major research library. Not only does the partnership between the library and association keep the service's cost reasonable, it ensures access to leading-edge and fully-vetted technologies. Further, NextLibris demonstrates that library/association partnerships serve as both a solid foundation and an enduring structure for viable book publishing programs. This model will assist other professional groups to expand their book publishing programs in a commercially viable way, while supporting the open access principles that associations and libraries cherish.

In respect to open access, Tamika, Dr. Jones, and Dr. Hunt are more likely to know that all publications in NextLibris become freely accessible no later than 14 years after date of publication, which is consistent with the original intent of the Copyright Act. In this way, NextLibris provides authors and SAA a sustainable way to underwrite the development of future works, while furthering the public good and SAA's desire to make archival information widely accessible. SAA's commitment to sustainable open access is certainly an appealing feature to them as they consider their own publishing options, whether through one of SAA's fully open access series, such as the Collaborative Research Series or the Case Studies Series, or through commercially viable series, such as the Trends in Archives Practice, the Archival Fundamentals Series III, or the Monographic Series.

Finally, Tamika and her professors may not know that four to six new books are published by SAA each year. The cost of production is fully underwritten by the membership premium, subscriptions to the NextLibris, and print book sales. For this reason, even though Tamika is just starting out on her archival journey, she can be rest assured that NextLibris and the SAA publishing program will be there for her and for her colleagues throughout their long and fruitful careers.