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## Review: Archival Silences: Missing, Lost and, Uncreated Archives

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**Review: *Archival Silences: Missing, Lost and, Uncreated Archives*.** Edited by Michael Moss and David Thomas (New York: Routledge, 2021), 257 pp.

Note: *Archival Silences: Missing, Lost and, \* Uncreated Archives* \*[sic]

*Archival Silences: Missing, Lost and, Uncreated Archives* undertakes the ambitious task of analyzing examples of silences found in archives around the world. Each chapter focuses on a specific country and works together to support the argument that archival silences are inevitable. Many silences are harmful in nature, resulting from autocratic regimes actively destroying records to cover up crimes or erase the voices of opposition groups. Others stem from less malicious intentions; for instance, restricting access to records due to privacy laws or neglecting the acquisition and processing of records due to lack of staffing or resources. Regardless of the reason, editors Michael Moss and David Thomas argue that archival silences are universal and that archivists should develop better means of recordkeeping and access to compensate for these absences.

Moss and Thomas served as professors in archival science programs in the United Kingdom, with the latter employed as a Director in the UK National Archives. Their academic and government influence is apparent in the chapters selected for inclusion. The contributors' backgrounds vary, including archivists from government and academic institutions, university faculty, historians, and researchers for government or nonprofit organizations. Most chapters have a social justice slant and are scholarly in nature. Students and scholars of archival studies, history, social sciences, international studies, and law would likely find this book appealing. Practicing archivists will recognize many of the issues in their own institutions; however, most chapters are more theoretical than practical.

The book is organized into twelve chapters, each focusing on examples of archival silences in Africa, Asia, Australia, the Caribbean, Europe, North America, and South America. They include an explanation of the historical, social, cultural, or political context surrounding the issue, a detailed analysis of the silence, as well as its causes, impacts, and potential remedies. Evidence consists of interviews, surveys, quantitative data, and historical research with archival records, manuscripts, and photographs. While each chapter provides a unique perspective, there are some recurring themes. For example, the prominence of oral traditions as the primary means of recordkeeping for a culture's history, especially among Indigenous and oppressed peoples, appears in several chapters. Authors argue that the lack of recognition and preservation of these as "official" records creates gaps in the cultures' histories. This may be due to the lack of equipment needed to capture and preserve audiovisual content, but it can also reveal a bias from archivists who view them as less significant compared to traditional records and deem them not worth collecting.

Some of the book's strengths arise from its geographical, historical, cultural, and institutional variety. Covering topics ranging from political prisoners, colonized peoples, and transitional government regimes to women's diaries, children's voices, and a national financial crisis, each chapter is unique while still reinforcing the inevitability of archival silences. While each makes a compelling argument, there is a little discontinuity as some are more implicit in how they relate to the silences or gaps that follow. One example concept in particular that could be better supported with data rather than anecdotal evidence is the argument that digitization itself creates silences.

Archival silences are a topic of increasing interest in archival theory and practice and this book offers fresh perspectives on what archivists can do to become more inclusive and give voices to those groups often overlooked in archives. The final chapter emphasizes the role of community archives in filling gaps and provides suggestions for how archivists can take a bolder approach to their collection development policies and work with records creators *where they are* when approaching how to include said records in more “traditionally formal” archival institutions. This timely, well-researched book is an important read for archivists around the world.

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