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Review: Decolonial Archival Futures

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Review: *Decolonial Archival Futures*. By Krista McCracken and Skylee-Storm Hogan-Stacey. (Chicago: Society of American Archivists and American Library Association), 2023. 86 pp.

Decolonial Archival Futures is part of the Archival Futures series (published jointly by the Society of American Archivists and the American Library Association) which examines the part that archivists/archives play in modern society and if current practice is enough to serve every stakeholder, not just academics, well into the future. Authors Krista McCracken and Skylee-Storm Hogan-Stacey use their experiences working with community archives for Indigenous cultures to invite archivists, especially those new to the profession, to examine their current practices. The authors argue that even though it is commonly accepted that current archival principles were started from a literal revolution, they are steeped in a colonizing mindset and therefore often harmful to the most vulnerable of users—if those users can even access the materials in the archives at all.

McCracken and Hogan-Stacey chose to examine four countries—Canada, United States, Australia, and New Zealand—based on these countries having Indigenous populations and also coming from the same "colonizing" background, the British Empire. The authors give a brief overview of how each country has dealt with these collections that pertain to the respective Indigenous cultures, how accessible the collections are to Indigenous cultures, if the archives are taking pains to make such collections useable to these communities, and the successes—or failures—to uphold native communities as stakeholders in collections dealing with their own historical materials.

Decolonial points out a problem with which many archivists find themselves contending: historical repositories often make cultural artifacts and materials inaccessible to the communities that created them by taking them away from the communities and making it difficult to access in the name of preservation. What the authors add to this argument are ways that archivists can change their thinking and activities to keep the original creators of the materials and their possible needs in mind. The authors use examples such as Native communities being unable to find relatives in collections due to not knowing which collections hold the materials that pertain to their families and then having said collection being named after an abuser of those family members, such as the principal of a reservation school as an example. Both challenges could be addressed by arranging the collections thematically instead of by the creator.

Even though *Decolonial* is short at only sixty-six pages of content (eighty-six pages in total), it is still a dense read. McCracken and Hogan Stacey use their experiences and research with precision and make sure every sentence has its purpose. Nothing in the book seems superfluous. The authors make sure that their message, stated facts, and suggestions came with proverbial receipts—almost twenty percent of the book is their citations. It might take several read-throughs to get a complete grasp of the messaging, but it is a necessary read, especially in a time when the profession is reexamining itself. Students and those entering the archival field will be able to think more critically about its associated professional principles and even seasoned archivists will walk away considering if they are truly treating every potential user as a stakeholder.

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