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Review: Museum Archives: Practice, Issues, Advocacy

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Review: *Museum Archives: Practice, Issues, Advocacy*. Edited by Rachel Chatalbash, Susan Hernandez, and Megan Schwenke. (Chicago: Society of American Archivists. 2022), 192 pp.

Museum Archives: Practice, Issues, Advocacy, edited by Rachel Chatalbash, Susan Hernandez, and Megan Schwenke, and contributed to by twenty-seven experienced and accomplished archivists, serves as a significant guiding text for museum archivists. This thorough and well-organized book is a must-have for any archivist. It is an essential resource for both new and seasoned professionals in the field, as well as for those in related disciplines who seek to understand the unique challenges and opportunities of managing museum archives.

The book features chapters on areas typically familiar to archivists, such as appraisal, access and use, and records management, while also including museum archives-specific best practices and examples. The final chapters focus on issues particularly pertinent to museums and museum archives. Readers, especially practitioners operating in such environments, will find the information on fundraising, ethics, restitution, repatriation and return, especially helpful given the museum context.

The book addresses the role of the museum archivist in advocating for museum archives within this broader museum context and educating museum colleagues about the value of archival collections and the benefits of collaboration.

The inclusion of high-quality photographs and scanned images significantly enhances the visual appeal of the book. The number and size of the images are intentionally featured throughout the book, adding an aesthetic dimension that complements the textual content.

The book is divided into three main parts:

- **Part I:** Outlines archival theory, functions, and processes, applying them to the museum context.
- **Part II:** Focuses on the types of records often encountered in museum archives, such as audiovisual records, oral histories, photographs, architectural records, artists' records, and field notes.
- **Part III:** Consists of issue-based chapters covering fundraising, ethics and values, provenance research, and the museum archives' role in repatriation, restitution, and the return of cultural objects.

The editors address early on the issue that museum archivists often face: their colleagues in other areas of museum administration “often do not consider the archives as essential to an institution’s identity or future and underestimate its potential impact.” The editors and contributing authors provide effective strategies for museum archivists to “combat these perceptions” and promote the vital role of archives *within museums* through relationship building. The editors advise that building these relationships is a career-long effort and will not take shape overnight.

The book addresses these perceptions positively, offering practical ways to advocate for museum archives. Two common themes throughout the book are advocacy for the museum archive and collaboration with various stakeholders in museums. The value of relationship building is emphasized throughout.

This resource is “full of ideas and best practices” for museum archivists, as noted by the editors. It benefits immensely from the collective expertise of its twenty-seven contributors, who bring diverse perspectives and experiences to the table. This diversity enriches the content and ensures comprehensive coverage of a wide range of issues and practices.

This publication is highly recommended for anyone involved in or interested in the world of museum archives. Its combination of practical advice, expert insights, and focus on advocacy makes it an essential resource for ensuring that museum archives continue to thrive and serve as vital repositories of cultural heritage.

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