

## NOTE

- <sup>1</sup> Perry Stein, "Gothamist Local News Network, Including DCist and DNAinfo, Abruptly Shut Down," *Washington Post*, November 3, 2017, sec. Local, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/gothamist-local-news-network-including-dcist-abruptly-shut-down/2017/11/02/b0ffc85a-c014-11e7-959c-fe2b598d8c00\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/gothamist-local-news-network-including-dcist-abruptly-shut-down/2017/11/02/b0ffc85a-c014-11e7-959c-fe2b598d8c00_story.html).

## Well, What Came Next? Selections from *ArchivesNext*, 2007–2017

By Kate Theimer. North Charleston, S.C.: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017. 397 pp. Softcover and EPUB. Softcover \$25.00, EPUB \$9.99. ISBN 978-1-54708-209-4.

Kate Theimer is probably best known in the archival field for the blog *ArchivesNext*, which she started in 2007 shortly after leaving NARA as a policy specialist. Because of that blog and her interests in Web 2.0 technologies, participatory archives, and rethinking the archival profession's role in the twenty-first century, Theimer has edited and written several books and articles on these and related topics. These works include the *Innovative Practices for Archives and Special Collections* series published by Rowman and Littlefield and the single volumes *A Different Kind of Web: New Connections between Archives and Our Users* (SAA, 2011) and *Web 2.0 Tools and Strategies for Archives and Local History Collections* (Neal-Schuman, 2010).

*Well, What Came Next?* is a "blook," or publication of selected entries from Theimer's blog over the course of its ten-year history. While many blog writers in other fields have successfully published blooks based on their blogs' content, I am unaware of any other archival blog author who has done this. Theimer chose over sixty entries from the hundreds of posts on her blog, organizing them into several small, digestible sections. These sections, typically containing five to ten posts, are organized thematically, ranging from the substantive topics for which she is known, such as "Social Media and the Web," "Archives Writ Large" (i.e., archives in a larger sociocultural context), and "Participatory Archives," to posts by guest bloggers and transcripts of keynote speeches and papers she has given at conferences around the world. The blook also includes lighter sections on archival humor and "Getting Personal, Doing Good," which focuses on more personal objectives, including the Spontaneous Scholarship Theimer organized for several years to help archivists travel to the Society of American Archivists (SAA) annual meeting and other service projects associated with SAA.

Each section is chronological, but the book overall is not, though earlier sections tend to contain earlier blog posts and later sections tend to contain later blog posts. Theimer makes sure to include the date and URL of each post, as well as the number of comments received. She deliberately did not include the comments themselves, pointing out in her introduction that these will continue to be available online. The lack of overall chronology can be a little jarring if one reads the volume from cover to cover, particularly if one is used to or expecting a chronological order, though the thematic arrangement of each section does mitigate some of this confusion. However, *Well, What Came Next?* also lends itself to picking up a section or a single posting, rather than reading it straight through. Because this book overall is a summation of conversations and thoughts evolving over the course of ten years, many sections are in dialogue with a wide range of works on the variety of topics that interest Theimer.

A publication like this displays some of the ironies and tensions of the current technological age: a (paper) book based upon an electronic blog, festooned with links to other online publications that may or may not still be available at their last known Web address. (Theimer took the time before publication to check links, noting in the footnotes when something no longer appeared to be working; you can go to the Wayback Machine yourself and see if you can find an archived copy.) Some content is also necessarily missing from the paperback version—one cannot embed a YouTube video or GIF into a book—which may or may not have made it into the EPUB version (I read the paper version). The volume is an example of one of Theimer's focuses: the very technology helping archives become more accessible and important to larger swaths of the world's population is the same technology making it difficult to preserve the documentation of the everyday life of the twenty-first century. (See, for example, the post "Gaps in the Past and Gaps in the Future: Archival Silences and Social Media," starting on page 333.) Will the paper version of this book become the archival record of the entire blog? And perhaps more important, will this volume be the only record of the Twitter hashtag #badarchivists to survive and be preserved into the future?

*Well, What Came Next?* provides a kind of time-lapse snapshot of where the archival profession stood for a brief time in the early twenty-first century, which is where some of its strength lies. This is also where the book could be most useful to archival educators and members of the profession who do not want to cull through an entire blog—or larger set of blogs—to understand some of the profession's context. Entries are not repetitive, nor do they seem to be missing context; Theimer did a good job selecting entries that highlight the issues. Many of the concerns that Theimer brought up in early posts from the blog—archivists' lack of focus on outreach, working with larger communities and those from different communities that have used archives in the past, and archivists

being their own advocates—indicate a turning in the profession away from its inward focus. This transition may be ongoing, but reading many of the entries from 2010, 2011, and before made me think, “We’ve come a long way since then as a profession.” Some of this change is no doubt in part due to Theimer’s blog and other writings. Seeing these posts in print also made me aware how much the profession has changed in a short amount of time.

Another strength of this compilation, and a way of distinguishing it from other publications Theimer has edited and/or written, is its informality. Nonetheless, the book still includes theory and challenges its readers to think. As Theimer said in a talk in 2016 at the International Seminar and Symposium in Vancouver, she is “still more comfortable expressing [herself] in a more informal way” (p. 333); she is also less interested in making specific academic arguments than in “giv[ing] people some big ideas to think about” (p. 137). Theimer’s writing style is clear and accessible. Her discussions of theoretical frameworks for participatory archives, digital humanities, the role of the professional archivist into the future, and other related topics may be more palatable for readers who would prefer to avoid too many heavy academic texts, but who want to form a better understanding about these subjects. Another bonus is that in the “Things I Published or Said While Standing Behind a Podium” section, Theimer includes the text of published articles in addition to the blog posts referencing those articles. This makes these perhaps more academic texts available to interested readers outside of a pay wall or library.

Because the sections jump around in time, the most coherent section is “Asking Smart People What They Think (or, Posts by Guests Bloggers),” a series of guest posts mostly from early 2009. This may be partly why it is one of my favorite sections of the book. Another favorite is “Our Friends, the Historians,” which includes several posts focusing on the tensions between what historians and what archivists understand to be archival work. Coming from a public history background, that section particularly resonated with me. Additionally, I really enjoyed the earlier-mentioned set of talks and articles Theimer has given that she includes toward the end of the volume. These selections, including the guests’ posts focusing on the future of archives, are the most thought-provoking and engaging for me. They are also still very relevant to the challenges the profession continues to face; they helped me think about and reevaluate my own professional philosophies and are the sections that I continue to think about after putting the book down. I truly enjoyed as well reading some archival humor in printed form (including the back cover’s “reviews”)—how often do we see archivists poking fun at their own work and profession, other than occasionally online through blogs and Twitter?

Two minor things: being a self-published paperback, the volume construction is a little weak—I’m not sure how long the front cover will remain intact,

for example. I also would perhaps suggest not reading the epilogue—in some ways its discouraged tone about living in the United States in 2017 is very jarring after the optimistic and engaged tone of the rest of the volume. One does not need to end a retrospective on a celebratory note, but I think in some respects, the epilogue does the rest of the book, which is worth reading, a disservice by diminishing what the blog accomplished over its ten years.

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## The Silence of the Archive

By David Thomas, Simon Fowler, and Valerie Johnson. London: Facet Publishing, 2017. 224 pp. Softcover and EPUB. \$76.00US, £64.95UK. Softcover ISBN 978-1-78330-155-3; EPUB ISBN 978-1-78330-157-7.

*The Silence of the Archive* is the latest installment of Facet's *Principles and Practice in Records Management and Archives* series developed as a core set of texts for scholars and practitioners in the fields of archives and records management. Like the rest of the series, the text is largely written from a British perspective. David Thomas, Simon Fowler, and Valerie Johnson critically engage with the concept of archival silences. The authors each have extensive experience working in the public sector as archivists and records managers, lending to the book's focus on a public records tradition rather than a manuscript tradition. Simon Fowler and David Thomas, in addition to having decades of experience working for The National Archives (U.K.) and its predecessor the Public Record Office, each hold academic positions at the Centre of Archives and Information Science at the University of Dundee and Computer and Information Sciences at the University of Northumbria, respectively. Valerie Johnson similarly has years of experience in public records in the United Kingdom and currently serves as the director of Research and Collections at The National Archives. The examples highlighted in *The Silence of the Archive* come from experiences with public records in the United Kingdom, Australia, South Africa, and the United States, among other countries. This book explores the ways in which archival practices can result in silences within the archival record and outlines ways archivists can try to counteract this phenomenon. *The Silence of the Archive* is largely theoretical but provides key recommendations for improving the records landscape to prevent archival silences. The book can serve as a guide to raise consciousness about archival silences among both archivists and users of archives.