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Preface

WELCOME TO THE LATEST STEP in a twenty-five-year professional and personal journey. In the mid-1990s, I was a young faculty member unable to find a one-volume summary of contemporary American archival theory and practice for classroom use. Only when I began writing the book did I realize the difficulty of the task and the reason others avoided it. The result in 1996 was the first edition of *Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives*.

The phrase *Practical Archives* always has had two meanings for me. First, it involves showing people today how much their lives depend on archives and the information they contain. This accounts for the book's numerous real-life examples of the value of records. Second, managing archives can never be an abstract process. This has been brought home to me again and again in my teaching career. While professionals working with archives have a body of theory and methodology to guide them, it is the actual *practice* of the archival craft that enables society to benefit from the records preserved. I am always pleased when graduates tell me how the things we discussed made a difference in their working lives—that class was both theoretical and *practical*.

Seven years later, in 2003, I published the second edition of *Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives*. This book kept the original chapter outline but included expanded content to reflect the growth of and changes within the archival profession. I was pleased with the reception the book received and honored when the Society of American Archivists presented the second edition with the Waldo Gifford Leland Award for “writing of superior excellence and usefulness in the field of archival history, theory, or practice.”

My intention was to publish a third edition long before now. Let me apologize again to the colleagues who have been waiting patiently for years! Two major professional opportunities—six years as part of the team that designed and built the Electronic Records Archives (ERA) for the National Archives and Records Administration and six years as editor of the *American Archivist*—consumed almost all of my nonteaching time. However, both of these experiences helped shape this third edition.

After my work on the ERA project, I no longer treat digital records as a separate “problem” covered in a chapter near the end of the book. Rather, I have integrated digital records—as well as audiovisual records—into every chapter. This reflects the current *practice* in archives, which was the reason for writing this book in the first place. Every area of archival responsibility—surveys and starting an archives, selection and appraisal, acquisition and accessioning, arrangement and description, preservation and security, reference and access, and outreach and advocacy—has been affected by digital records. In each chapter, I include the most recent theory and current best practices for both analog and digital records of all types and formats.

My time as editor of the *American Archivist* immersed me in the latest professional thinking around two key areas. The first, community archives, recognizes that professional archival institutions are not the answer to every preservation question. Some communities are choosing to maintain their own historical legacies rather than transferring records to an institution that may not reflect the community’s values and beliefs. The second area, the character of the archival profession itself, includes discussions of diversity, inclusion, and social justice. Therefore, this third edition features extensive sections on community archives and the archival profession.

I noted earlier that the three editions of *Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives* reflect a personal as well as a professional journey. My wife, Joann Heaney-Hunter, to whom I dedicated the first edition, has been with me even longer than this book. In 2019 we celebrated our fortieth wedding anniversary. I dedicated the second edition to our daughters, Beth and Kate, who now are professionals in their thirties and parents in their own right. I have dedicated the third edition to their children—our grandchildren—Stephen, Gregory, Samuel, and Isabelle. Should there be interest in a fourth edition, I promise to finish it before our grandchildren have children!

Finally, what is the significance of “Noah and the bees” in the dedication of the book? One day when Beth was young, she was very excited to share with me a joke she heard on *Mr. Rogers*. “Where did Noah keep the bees? In the Ark-hives!” I have passed this joke along to our grandchildren, who are probably still too young to appreciate it but laugh because the adults do. They will grow into this, as they will other parts of their personal legacies. It takes a lifetime to understand the past, make it relevant today, and pass it along. Isn’t this also what archivists do? What a challenging and inspiring mission we have!

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