

Managing Digital Cultural Objects: Analysis, Discovery, and Retrieval. Eds. Allan Foster and Pauline Rafferty. Chicago: ALA Neal-Schuman, 2016. 227 p. \$88.00 softcover (ISBN 978-0-8389-1343-7).

Over the past twenty years, libraries, archives, museums, and other institutions have made hundreds of thousands of digitized and born digital cultural heritage objects available online. This momentum is not likely to slow anytime soon. Digitization programs continue to convert analog media, and efforts are ramping up to procure and preserve born digital material. While discussion of technical specifications and skills to support these processes are critical, there is a growing body of research beyond these topics. Some scholars and practitioners have turned their attention towards theory, assessment, and innovative analysis and *Managing Digital Cultural Objects: Analysis, Discovery, and Retrieval* adds to this conversation.

The book is arranged into three parts, each with three chapters. The first part, “Analysis and retrieval of digital cultural objects,” aims to give basic introductory and contextual information; the second part, “Digitization projects in libraries, archives and museums: case studies,” introduces examples of work; and the third, “Social networking and digital cultural objects,” includes chapters on image, music, and film discoverability. However, these divisions do not organize the content particularly well. As the title of the book indicates, each chapter relates to an aspect of analysis, discovery, and retrieval of digital cultural objects and these concepts would have served as better thematic divisions.

Professionals in the library and cultural heritage sector understand the importance of digital cultural objects and the challenges related to making this content accessible and discoverable. One such challenge is creating access points. Descriptive practices are constrained by a number of factors. Besides the fundamental challenges introduced by operating from a particular worldview, there is the desire to adhere to established vocabularies and metadata structures to ensure system functionality and data interoperability. Authors Rafferty, Jörgensen, and Le Barre and Cordeiro, each in their separate chapters, point out the limitations created as a result of particular worldviews, assumptions, and by conforming to standards. Standards remain important, but these authors, along with Higgins, emphasize consideration of user goals, needs, and potential contributions in digital library design and content description.

Digital preservation is key to the retrieval of cultural digital objects and in recent years has burgeoned in study and practice. It is discussed throughout a few chapters in different ways. Weller points out challenges in preserving social media and web content, which is crucial in advocating these media as new historical sources. Pennock and Day introduce both overarching organizational strategies and initiatives surrounding digital preservation plus digital preservation

workflows at the British Library. Prentice addresses particularities of digitization and preservation of audiovisual content, which is not always considered in major discussions of digital cultural objects. Ultimately, institutions must make an organizational commitment to digital preservation, integrating it into system architecture and mainstream workflows in order to ensure the retrieval and use of digital content in years to come.

The wealth of digital content that libraries, archives, museums, and others have made available has opened up new opportunities for collaboration. Interdisciplinary teams undertake new and creative analyses of these resources. Two chapters illustrate examples of computer scientists collaborating with librarians and digital humanities researchers. Dee et al. write about their work to automate metadata creation for artworks based on image characteristics. Orio describes a project to identify similarities in music for the purposes of removing duplicates from a collection and providing interesting points of analysis for music scholars. Both chapters include a technical breakdown of computational processes which some readers may find difficult to understand. However, this did not take away from the general aim of each chapter. Both are fascinating and provide inspiration for other collaborations.

The editors state in their introduction that their objective in creating this book was to “inspire prospective students to develop creative and innovative research projects at Masters’ and PhD levels” (xvii), and it accomplishes that goal. Those entering the field today have different concerns and considerations than students in years past. This book provides some foundational information, but mainly presents new ideas and issues such as digital preservation, linked data, user-centered design, and digital humanities.

Chapters are written at varying levels of detail. Many chapters serve to introduce ideas and whet the appetite with the expectation that interested individuals will pursue further study. In fact, this is mentioned in the book’s introduction. Authors were asked to provide a “broad-ranging bibliography” (xviii) for their chapter to encourage additional research. Each chapter has an extensive list of references providing the reader with plenty of resources to explore these ideas.

This book also offers a variety of perspectives. It was published in the United Kingdom with simultaneous publication in the United States. A majority of the authors are affiliated with European institutions and so drew upon different digital library and research examples than those generally appearing in American literature. This international perspective along with the theoretical, applied, academic, and administrative points of view represented throughout make this an insightful collection of works.

This book serves a good introduction to current areas of research in the sphere of digital cultural heritage.

Both students and professionals alike will benefit from these works on important issues that face this domain. Although the chapter arrangement makes it somewhat difficult to detect, the themes of analysis, discovery, and retrieval bring this collection together overall. This unique

volume containing new analyses and case studies is a valuable contribution to the field's body of literature.—*Anne Washington* (*awashington@uh.edu*), *University of Houston, Houston, Texas*