

Genealogical Research on the Web. By Diane K. Kovacs. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc., 2002. 194 pages. \$55. Soft cover.

The Internet has eased and transformed the process of conducting genealogical research. Any basic search engine can provide a large amount of information, which makes sorting the useful from the useless a difficult task. Frustrated with the misinformation that abounds on-line, many users may retreat to the printed page for advice. Several genealogy guides published recently have taken a combined approach in discussing how print and Internet sources can help manage information and provide a map for conducting research.

One of these, *Genealogical Research on the Web*, is notable in the straightforward approach that its author, Diane Kovacs employs. Kovacs outlines how to conduct historical research and discusses the importance of documentation, two items notably lacking in many genealogy and family history guides. Kovacs regards documentation as proof that cuts through myths embedded in many family histories. The process of selecting on-line resources and the best way to approach repositories for information is also explained with the verification of facts in mind. Kovacs's methodology sensibly utilizes Internet tools in concert with human interaction without neglecting the traditional research techniques.

Kovacs begins by covering the basic questions that all researchers must ask before proceeding, such as, What exactly is being sought? What is already known? Where do I go from here? She describes the hardware and software needed for Internet use as well as the types of information available on the Web while detailing what is not available from the Internet and why that information is not posted. Most importantly, she explains why there is no substitute for historical research and for the documentation and verification of sources.

The last half of Kovacs's book lists specific tools that are the most helpful to genealogists, such as indexes and databases and where to find them. For example, Section Two covers resources available on the Internet and uses many examples to compare software choices and explain the differences between membership-only and free Web sites. The book also provides a list of the most popular and effective genealogy sites on the Internet and gives Internet addresses of many repositories of genealogical data.

The last section in the book explains how genealogists can work with family members and network with other genealogists to improve their chances of success. The Internet can ease research and save wasted trips; it cannot replace the social and personal connection of interviewing family members. As a result, the text advocates a mixed approach to the process, one that encompasses technology and personal interaction. Section Four explains how to locate international, African-American, and Native American ancestors and addresses potential problems that may be encountered along the way. Also quite useful, especially as experience is gained in using on-line sources, is the "webliography," a glossary and reference list in the back of the book that provides Web addresses for sites that evaluate genealogical information on the Internet, reference tools, genealogy discussion lists, addresses for repositories, courthouses, and cemeteries, travel planning, adoptee and birth parents information sites, heraldry, and African and Native American genealogy. Kovacs also includes a bibliography of print sources

with links to recent articles; on-line genealogy tutorials; sites that evaluate genealogical information on the Internet; links to archives that have genealogical data on-line; and a listing of some reference tools (SSDI, vital records, etc.). She also includes contact information for professional and amateur genealogical associations.

The best asset of this book is its accessibility. Kovacs explains every aspect of the process, from getting on-line to finding and verifying information. Throughout the book Kovacs gives many examples of dilemmas researchers may encounter, such as conflicting information regarding an ancestor to deciding which databases will be the most helpful for certain searches. She also includes exercises that the novice can do. She even goes so far as to list her Web site that has many learning activities and an E-mail address for people to contact her with questions <<http://www.kovacs.com/genbook/genbook.html>>.

Because of Kovacs's simplistic style, this book is excellent for the novice genealogist. Perhaps the biggest drawback of this book is its cost. It is \$55, while other books such as *The Source: A Guidebook of American Genealogy* (Salt Lake City: Ancestry, Incorporated, 1997), \$49.95, by Sandra H. Luebking and Loretto Dennis Szucs, and *A Research Guide to American Genealogy* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company Inc., 2000), \$29.95, by Val D. Greenwood contain far more information and cost much less. The inability to update the information is also a downfall of this book as many of the Web sites may be outdated quickly.

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Sample Forms for Archival and Records Management Programs. By ARMA International and the Society of American Archivists, Consulting Editor: Mary Lea Ginn, Ph.D. Lenexa, Kansas, and Chicago: ARMA International and the Society of American Archivists, 2002. \$40.00. 264 pp. Pocket Part: Compact Disc. Soft cover.

The advertisement that accompanied the book stated boldly that this is “[t]he book you’ve been waiting for!” Though many advertisements are filled with unsubstantiated hyperbole, in this case the advertisement was accurate. *Sample Forms for Archival and Records Management Programs*, published jointly by ARMA International and the Society of American Archivists, is definitely a book for which I have been waiting. In fact, after receipt of the book, I eagerly digested it because it was such a valuable resource for my work.

An important and exciting aspect of *Sample Forms* is that it is a collaborative effort of archivists and records managers. All too often, archivists and records managers have been in opposing camps. It is very refreshing to see ARMA and SAA work together to produce such a useful product. This book may represent a return to the golden age of Margaret Cross Norton, Ernst Posner, and T. R. Schellenberg when archivists, record managers, and forms managers were integrated into one profession rather than split into three professions. Some observers of the three professions believe that the trend of the last 10 years has been one of greater cooperation. This collaborative effort of ARMA and SAA certainly is a continuation of that trend.

The book is divided into two major parts: one for records management and one for archives management. The scope of the topics covered is comprehensive. In the records management section the sample forms are divided into the following topics:

- records management—general
- inventorying/scheduling
- records center/records control
- records destruction/disposition
- micrographics/quality control
- vital records
- miscellaneous records management forms

The forms in the archives management division are organized under the following topics:

- survey and appraisal
- disposition and accessioning
- arrangement and description
- use and reference
- preservation
- management and miscellaneous

The book is accompanied by a very useful compact disc (CD) version (compatible with Windows 95, 98, 2000, and NT, and Macintosh operating systems) that contains all of the book’s forms in portable document format (PDF), rich text format (RTF), and in Microsoft Word 97.

Prospective readers need to be cognizant of two caveats stressed by the book's compilers. First, each institution's legal counsel should review the forms and policies before using them. Laws vary from state to state and change over time. Second, the ARMA-SAA joint committee did not set out to create the "ideal" form for a particular situation. Rather, they tried to compile a book of the best forms available and adapt them for general use: "The purpose of publishing this manual is to provide useful samples from a broad group of organizations from which users may choose those most closely mirroring their own needs and practices" (pp. xv-xvi).

The forms found in the "Vital Records" section provide a good example of the book's usefulness in, for example, disaster planning. This section contains forms covering the gamut of developing and implementing a vital records program, including analysis, retention, protection, control, and maintenance. By following the progression and organization of these forms, record managers and archivists will be able to better identify and safeguard vital records—records that are essential for the continuation, continuity, and sometimes even the survival of an organization, particularly in the event of a disaster or other calamity.

The number and quality of forms found in the "Preservation" section illustrate the book's comprehensiveness. There are 30 forms in this section alone. They include forms for conservation and for preservation surveys of audio, video, photographic, and microfilm holdings, together with guidelines and procedures for rescue and salvage of materials, emergency instruction and disaster prevention, and even a form with recommended questions that should be asked of paint manufacturers.

By using the forms and other resources provided by *Sample Forms*, records managers and archivists will find their work to be much less difficult and certainly less frustrating. For many of us in the fields of records and archives management, *Sample Forms* is definitely the book for which we have been waiting. This collaborative effort by SAA and ARMA is a great success.

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Creating a Winning Online Exhibition: A Guide for Libraries, Archives, and Museums. By Martin R. Kalfatovic. Chicago and London: American Library Association, 2002. \$40.00. 117 pp. Index, black and white illustrations, and appendices, including bibliography of exhibitions. Soft cover.

In her forward to Martin Kalfatovic's book, S. Diane Shaw writes that "until now, there has been surprisingly little guidance directed specifically to the library and archival communities on how to go about doing on-line exhibitions" (p. ix). This is a key point because my first reaction upon reading Kalfatovic's book was to wish it had been available when I began working on digital collections and on-line exhibits.

One of the book's most valuable features is how it helps information professionals avoid reinventing the wheel each time they embark upon a digital project. Many books and articles discuss issues that impact the creation of on-line exhibits. To my knowledge, this is the first volume that brings together and clearly explains all of the steps and considerations involved.

While valuable when read cover to cover, this book also provides ready reference for various topics. The index is excellent, the chapters are laid out with clear subheadings to facilitate browsing, the appendices provide valuable examples of the various topics, and each chapter contains a list of sources cited and on-line exhibits discussed there. The book is divided into 10 chapters with descriptive titles that make it easy to grasp the basic concepts and issues covered in each. In the following paragraphs I will highlight just a few chapters I found particularly helpful.

"Online Exhibitions versus Digital Collections." In this chapter, Kalfatovic draws an important distinction between digital collections and on-line exhibitions. Kalfatovic argues that it is the "connection between idea, object and script" that distinguishes an on-line exhibit (p. 3), a well-established concept in the world of physical exhibitions. Over time, exhibitions created by museums, libraries, and archives have moved from simple displays of objects with labels to complex exhibits that explore and present a story, theme, or experience. For example, a well thought out and coordinated exhibit that allows visitors to travel through two centuries of textile-related technology is much more likely to generate interest than a collection of spinning wheels.

In creating a similar distinction for the virtual exhibit, Kalfatovic makes an important point. Many materials that museums, archives, and libraries put on-line—from searchable databases and finding aids to on-line library catalogs—provide valuable access to collections. But these are not exhibits. Understanding this distinction does not denigrate the value of digital collections. Rather, it allows information professionals to better define the purpose of a digital project and to determine whether that project makes more sense as an exhibition or as a digital collection.

"Executing the Exhibition Idea." This chapter provides a core set of advice for planning an on-line exhibition. Building on the previous chapter, it covers such topics as the exhibition proposal, drafting a script, and selecting objects for digitization (there is also an example proposal and script in the appendices). The chapter also discusses the importance of "a clear and well-defined exhibition policy" and gives an outline of the major elements such a policy should contain (p. 21). Kalfatovic's suggestions will prove

useful even for those who have worked on on-line exhibits and digital projects for years.

“Technical Issues” (Chapters 5–7). These three chapters cover a wide variety of technical issues that every institution working with technology must eventually face. Kalfatovic’s writing and organizational style are particularly valuable in this portion of the book. He clearly and succinctly lays out options, considerations, and technologies while avoiding (or explaining) any technical jargon. Every digital project has many technical issues; having a resource that presents and explains these options concisely is invaluable, especially for those new to digital projects. Kalfatovic’s explanation and examples of Cascading Style Sheets (CSS), for example, made much more sense to me than any description I’ve read.

My only criticism is that I would have liked more information on the basis for the recommendations in Kalfatovic’s scanning standards table (p. 47). While I agree with his statement that “you should always scan at the highest practical resolution” (p. 47) and with his discussion of different limiting factors, my experience has shown that there is a wide variety of recommendations for digitization standards. More detail in this area would enrich Kalfatovic’s discussion.

“Design.” In this chapter Kalfatovic compares design in physical and virtual environments. He discusses challenges Web designers face, including screen size and layout, color and font display, designing clear navigation, and developing metadata for the Web. It would have been helpful had Kalfatovic covered Web-site accessibility issues here or given a cross-reference to the “Technical Issues: Programming, Scripting, Databases, and Accessibility” chapter that covers this subject in more detail, but this is an otherwise excellent overview of Web design issues.

The chapters mentioned here only skim the surface of the topics covered in this book. *Creating a Winning Online Exhibition* not only lives up to its title, it exceeds it. Clear and well organized, this book lays out different considerations for planning and executing an on-line exhibit. From policies, staffing, and exhibit ideas to digital imaging and coding, this book provides a guide for every step of the process and points the reader to a wealth of resources for each topic discussed. There are many reasons for museums, libraries, and archives to create on-line exhibits, but there are also many challenges. Kalfatovic’s book helps us negotiate both.

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