

Archives for the Lay Person: A Guide to Managing Cultural Collections (American Association for State and Local History)

By Lois Hamill

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For volunteers or staff at small organizations, collections management can be a daunting task. *Archives for the Lay Person* is a guidebook for people who care for historical records, photographs, and collections but do not have the appropriate professional training. Lois Hamill provides practical, step-by-step guidance for managing all facets of archival collections, from acquisition, arrangement, and description to storage and security. The book also offers advice on how to utilize PastPerfect software for collections database management.

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Editorial Review

Review
In this concise but extremely thorough book, Lois Hamill, University Archivist at Northern Kentucky University, bridges the gap for individuals and smaller institutions that need to organize what may often be long neglected collections. In this era of resource constraint, Lois takes a methodical approach to the description of these items, relying heavily on the affordable Past Perfect Software which can generate museum quality records for the beginner, with the informed narrative from Ms. Hamill to lead the way. . . . If there was one ready reference work I would recommend to
someone commencing an archival collection it would be the *Archives for the Lay Person*. Ms. Hamill has given us a roadmap, folded neatly. We need only drive. (*The Southeastern Librarian, Vol. 61, No. 1, Spring 2013*)

An authoritative but accessible guide to managing archival collections for those without formal training on the subject. . . . This text is an invaluable resource for dedicated but non-degreed staff and volunteers at local cultural and historical associations. (*Campbell County Historical Society, Vol. 19, No. 2, May 2013*)

Throughout the text's 287 thoughtfully written pages, Ms. Hamill, a certified archivist with more than fourteen years of experience, delivers. The author delineates the numerous and often painstaking process and practices which form the backbone of archival theory in accessible terms for the many passionate - but often untrained - lay persons working with the unique collections found in historical societies, local history rooms at public libraries, community museums and other such organizations.

The book allows readers to readily identify relevant interest areas for quick reference. Content headings throughout the chapters also facilitate ease of use and guided browsing. Utilizing concisely worded, step-by-step instructions, Ms. Hamill clearly explains each critical state of processing.

This authoritative, easy-to-use resource is highly recommended for the many librarians, volunteers, student interns, museum personnel, and other lay persons entrusted with the preservation of their collections and communities cultural legacy. (*Kentucky Libraries*)

[A]rchivists and other professionals involved with historical collections will want to become familiar with Archives for the Lay Person: A Guide to Managing Cultural Collections. Community outreach is a reality of every archivist’s work, and most of us have heard some form of the question, “I found these old documents and I don’t know what to do with them. Can you help?’. . . .[P]eople who are new to the profession and working in solo positions may also find information of value in the text. Archives for the Lay Person is comprehensive in its approach, and yet a reader might open the book to find advice for a specific need and then follow the steps provided for any point in the life cycle of a record. . . .A professional may also find him- or herself helping someone who has professional training in and primary responsibilities for another field and has been given the task of organizing historical records as an extra, part-time duty. Regardless of the specific use, collection type, or staffing need in an institution, Archives for the Lay Person: A Guide to Managing Cultural Collections will serve as a useful tool. The instruction provided in this work goes a long way toward achieving our mutual interests: the survival of collections being cared for in a variety of cultural organizations and their use by the wide community. (*The American Archivist*)

Lois Hamill's new book, *Archives for the Lay Person*, neatly outlines in fourteen chapters the basic concepts of archives management, including acquisition, arrangement, description, the reference interaction, security, exhibits, environmental conditions, and disaster preparedness. Hamill's is an excellent resource for newly minted archivists, or for curators of historical papers who might not have studied the principles of archives. It also serves as an excellent reminder for seasoned archivists. . . .Photographs, by which Hamill means prints, slides, and negatives, as well as digital images, can be a huge component of personal and business papers. Her detailed suggestions for care and handling, and clear and simple descriptions of nineteenth century formats and processes, are among the strengths of the volume. Hamill's explanation of a few overarching rules of copyright in photographs is an excellent starting point for anyone new to the field. Of particular use are Hamill's appendices, again designed with the layperson in mind. They include sample policies, procedures, key forms and representative examples of same, and a partial list of vendors, all of which are super handy for beginners. . . .A refreshing and reassuring read, Lois Hamill's *Archives for the Lay Person* would be a nice addition to a graduate-level archives syllabus as well as to any archivist's reference collection. (*Metropolitan Archivist*)

Hamill's book is written with a specific audience in mind: the small archives, historical societies, and local history organizations that want more background and advice on the best ways to build and care for their collections. For those organizations, *Archives for the Lay Person* is an invaluable resource and reference book. Although some of the specifics may need to be adapted for your institutions collection, the basic principles outlined will be a major help in shaping your work. If you want to make sure you're doing things 'the right way,' this book should be on your shelf. (*The Local Historian from the Ohio Local History Alliance*)

About the Author
Lois Hamill is university archivist and an assistant professor at Northern Kentucky University. She has previously worked with local historical society, church, and government records.

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