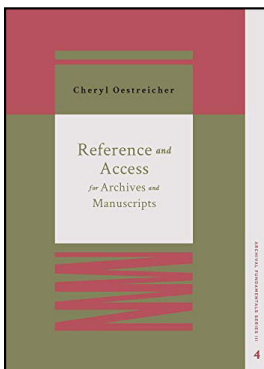


These essays provide reliable guidance for librarians and information specialists to initiate the processing of their rare collections, including the cases at my institution. Furthermore, this book publicize East Asian Libraries in North America, which have been conscientiously serving significant stakeholders on institutional, regional, national, and international levels.

Finally, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude and respect to all the contributors and Dr. Yang, who stated that “the potential for digging out new East Asian studies resources is still endless.” I hope this book encourages current library school students and aspiring scholars in the next generation to apply for East Asian Librarianship in North America. — *Mitsu Nakamura, Washington University in St. Louis*

Cheryl Oestreicher. *Reference and Access for Archives and Manuscripts*, (SAA) Archival Fundamentals Series III. Chicago, IL: Society of American Archivists, 2022. Edited by Peter J. Wosh. 195 pages. Paper, PDF, Kindle \$69.00 (ISBN: 978-1-945246-40-1)



Reference and Access for Archives and Manuscripts by Cheryl Oestreicher is a comprehensive guide for archives and special collections workers published by the Society of American Archivists as part of the Archival Fundamentals Series III. The information is presented in a straightforward manner with the aim of describing and contextualizing the skills, policies, practices, and specific tasks of reference and access within the much-changed contemporary archival services landscape. Oestreicher is a new voice in the Fundamentals series on the topic of reference and access. Mary Jo Pugh admirably authored the previous iterations dating back to the first series in the 1990s up until the most recent 2005 edition.

Oestreicher’s update is in many ways long overdue as the platforms, use, and users of archives have dramatically shifted. Still, the fundamental goal of all archival labor remains the same: access. As Oestreicher notes, “Archivists attend to tasks with access as the ultimate goal, from acquisition through processing” (2). Oestreicher thus situates reference and access work as central to the entire archives project, not merely beholden to it. The book’s intended function is that of a manual and, as such, offers little explicit interrogation of archives and archival labor as sites of struggle. However, in the great detail and care with which Oestreicher unravels the specifics of our archival labor one cannot help but find solidarity: *this is what my work looks like, too*.

Oestreicher divides the book into thirteen chapters that can be read in any sequence. The first two, “Contextualizing Reference within an Archives Program” and “Reference Skills and Knowledge,” provide a broad overview, while the remainder delve more deeply into the specifics of the work. Chapters on “Users,” “Reference Interaction,” and “Intellectual and Physical Access” bring fresh perspectives to well-worn territory and clarify that Oestreicher is aware of work on the ground and in scholarship that has problematized and reimagined that work. Indeed, the acknowledgements and appendixes attest to the deep research and work she engaged in order to understand different practices across different types of repositories and institutions.

Chapter 7, “Virtual Access,” offers entirely new content that is no longer merely speculative about the future of archival access in the “digital age.” Sections on digitization, digital collections, access and preservation systems, and digital research methods now benefit from specific examples that will encourage interested readers to learn more. There is still plenty of room for expanded discussion of these developments in the field. For example, given the

rate of adoption of ILL practices in archives and special collections, Oestreicher's treatment of Interlibrary Loan will likely be much more robust in the next edition.

Oestreicher expands on and in some cases completely departs from much of the guidance of the previous volumes. For example, in chapter 4's section Dealing with Difficult Patrons, Oestreicher takes a decidedly more worker-centric and empathetic view. She steers us away from "the customer is always right" and instead centers the experience of the archivist in dealing with difficult situations. She suggests that workers call a supervisor for help when things get tense and "thoroughly document" ongoing or extreme instances of abuse from patrons (49). Oestreicher then addresses the stress difficult situations can cause and recommends specific techniques to alleviate it.

Whether intentional or not, throughout the book Oestreicher gives us the language and framework to make archival labor more visible. For example, in chapter 5 she encourages adding specific explanatory context for why certain rules exist in the documentation we provide to researchers. When dealing with outdated audiovisual materials that users (often incorrectly) assume we can provide access to, she suggests that "openly communicating the challenges, such as the cost of equipment or reformatting" (59), can help us educate users about the specifics of our work and the challenges posed by limited resources.

Oestreicher's professional guidance responds to many of the ethical concerns that archivists are currently grappling with in the literature and at conferences. Chapter 8 considers all activities related to reference and access as inherently ethical projects, from policies that offer the most inclusive terms of access to a sincere discussion of physical and digital accessibility. In a subsection on patron privacy, Oestreicher's guidance is notably more robust than in previous editions. In the 2005 edition, Pugh presented roughly one paragraph on "Protecting Information about Users," which focuses on protecting credit card and registration information from "identity thieves." In contrast, Oestreicher covers every site of potential interaction with a patron, including in-person and remote communication, the implications of the USA PATRIOT Act for libraries and archives, data collection on paper and in electronic format, data anonymization, and consideration for how our integrated library systems and other software platforms collect and store patron data.

Outreach and instruction, other activities often found alongside reference and access in many job descriptions, are briefly addressed. Outreach is given a more thorough treatment: an entire chapter is dedicated to the topic. Primary source or archival instruction is mentioned a few times throughout. However, both archival instruction and outreach are deserving of their own volumes in the Archival Fundamental Series and are indeed well covered elsewhere. The strengths of this book are in its detailed treatment of reference and access.

On its surface, *Reference and Access for Archives and Manuscripts* seems like a manual best suited to a student or new archives professional, and it certainly is that. Reading it as a seasoned archives worker is equally valuable and presents the potential to spark new ideas. But more than that, in presenting *the work* accurately in multifaceted detail, making it legible across institutional contexts, Oestreicher creates a space for both practical knowledge and professional affinity among archives workers to flourish. —Leah Richardson, George Washington University

Note

1. Mary Jo Pugh, *Providing Reference Services for Archives & Manuscripts* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005), 196.