

Harvey, Ross. **Digital Curation: A How-To-Do-It Manual® (Number 170)**. New York, NY: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2010. 225 pp. \$80.00 USD. ISBN-13: 978-1-55570-694-4.

For over five years now I have been going through a sort of professional crisis of identity. I am a digital curator by name but perhaps not entirely by practice. My job description was written in 2007 when the term digital curation was beginning to take hold in libraries and archives. It can be argued that the responsibilities articulated in my job description do not reflect the full spectrum of duties required of a digital curator today. At the time it was written there was considerable debate over what the concept entailed. Some scholars equated it with digital preservation. Others, such as administrators at my institution, put a heavier emphasis on providing access to digital content – more akin to a curator of digital exhibits. Today, consensus is building towards an understanding of the concept of digital curation that involves interaction with data and digital objects throughout all stages of their lifecycle – from their creation or receipt, to their access, use, reuse, and all the stages in between.

Ross Harvey's **Digital Curation: A How-To-Do-It Manual** builds on that consensus by providing a clearer understanding of the practice of digital curation that is based on the Digital Curation Centre's Curation Lifecycle Model. His intended audience is information professionals and students of these disciplines, but also anyone who creates or interacts with data, or as he puts it, "everyone who uses computers," (p. xvi). I imagine that he must be an excellent instructor as he is able to clearly and concisely introduce some very complex concepts and terminology in an easily comprehensible manner. In fact, this book would serve as an excellent textbook for many Library and Information Science or Archival Studies programs. It may not be suitable for the entirety of his intended audience (my 2 year-old uses a computer!), but certainly anyone with a working knowledge of the digital humanities and sciences will find the book useful – as a reference guide at the very least.

Harvey, an internationally recognized expert on digital curation and digital preservation (currently Senior Lecturer in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Simmons College, Boston), clearly understands his topic. The first part of the book provides an overview of digital curation. In addition to introducing a few key concepts, Harvey asks the question "Why is digital curation important?" and explores the value inherent in the data that we are trying to curate and preserve. The attributions of value Harvey places on data are generally accurate, although, throughout the book he places perhaps too heavy an emphasis on the value of e-science and research data to the exclusion of discussing data generated by the digital humanities.

Harvey defines digital curation as being "concerned with actively managing data for as long as it continues to be of scholarly, scientific, research, administrative, and/or personal interest, with the aims of supporting reproducibility, reuse of, and adding value to that data, managing it from its point of creation until it is determined not to be useful,

and ensuring its long-term accessibility, preservation, authenticity, and integrity” (p. 8). This focus on the lifecycle of data and digital objects, specifically the lifecycle as designed by the DCC’s Curation Lifecycle Model, serves as the structure of the remaining two sections of the book. Part II examines each of the Curation Lifecycle Model’s Full Lifecycle Actions (Curate and Preserve; Description and Representation Information; Preservation Planning; and Community Watch and Participation) in greater detail, while Part III focuses on the Model’s Sequential and Occasional Actions (Conceptualise; Create or Receive; Appraise and Select; Reappraise; Dispose; Ingest; Preservation Action; Migrate; Store; Access, Use, and Reuse; and Transform). Each chapter of these two sections of the book has common characteristics: a detailed overview of a specific action, discussions about policy management for each action, examples of aspects of each action in practice, and descriptions of the tools available to automate certain functions. Organizing these sections in this way allows the reader to follow the data along the digital curation workflow, learn details about each stage of the lifecycle, and gain an appreciation for the intricacies involved in each step along the way. Overall, the structure of the book would have been strengthened by a concluding chapter summarizing the key points of the book and possibly highlighting future challenges.

In each action-packed chapter, Harvey describes the interdependence of each lifecycle action. While this is helpful in demonstrating the interrelatedness of the lifecycle actions, it results in some duplication in definitions of key concepts and terminology. This duplication can be distracting at times, but it can also be beneficial to the reader, serving to reinforce the reader’s comprehension of these key concepts and terms. Also, anyone referencing a specific chapter of the book will not have to consult other chapters for information on related subjects. However, when reading the book cover-to-cover, which, granted, is likely not the intended or even recommended way to read this book, the repetition can be somewhat monotonous.

Harvey is quite good at recognizing the global achievements in digital curation and digital preservation, often referring to advancements made in Australia or the United Kingdom in addition to the United States, but, with the exception of passing references to Chuck Humphrey and the Canadian Heritage Information Network, references to Canadian contributions to digital curation are lacking. One prime example is the glaring omission of Artefactual System’s Archivemata suite of digital preservation micro-services from the discussion of ingest tools. One possible reason for this omission is that the book was published in 2010, and although Archivemata was in existence at that time, it was in a much earlier release and still making inroads within the digital curation community. The software’s user community and its reputation as a dependable digital curation tool have grown significantly in the three years since the book’s publication. A revised edition incorporating the many advancements in this rapidly-evolving field would be welcome.

The accompanying website (www.neal-schuman.com/curation) provides checklists, templates, and links to resources mentioned in the book that help illustrate a few of the

key concepts. Several of the checklists and templates could be applied by digital curators to ensure the standardized curation of the data with which they are entrusted.

This book is very well-written in a style that lends itself to easy comprehension. It is an essential reference resource for anyone needing a basic, yet thorough, overview of the complex subjects of digital curation and digital preservation. You certainly do not need to be a digital curator in order to find this book useful, but if you are, you may come away with a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities that your position should entail.

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