The book includes high-quality images, descriptive citations, and a thoughtful selection of items from the collection. Fifty essays provide a wide-ranging view of the development and history of the library. The structure of the book is chronological, which creates a natural flow for readers to explore the creation and expansion of the library. Essays and recollections are short, light, and easy reading for those who are unfamiliar with the library. Even in their brevity, the essays impart enough knowledge of the collection so that professionals will find them interesting and worthwhile. The book is also an excellent template for others wishing to highlight their institution's history and collections for major anniversaries or as a coffee table book for sale to the public.

Offerings range from the humorous to the bittersweet, including the amazing account of a small aircraft that crashed into the library's reading room. Highlights include behind-the-scenes memoirs, a description of the acquisition of the first edition of the *Star-Spangled Banner*, and materials for the Medler Crime Collection. Essays by past employees offer insight into both the philosophy beyond the growth of the collection, as well as the day-to-day operations. The book ends with a tribute to the staff, which includes the names of all past employees, as well as some of their pictures. This addition is a fitting tribute to the people who have been instrumental in the growth and success of the institution.

The book complements the library's publication, *The Quarto*.[1] Although some stories have appeared previously in *The Quarto*, the addition of personal recollections, articles from other journals, and high-quality photographs provide enough new and engaging material for this new compilation to be of value.

The book is a delightful read for anyone who has an interest in libraries and Americana. The authors have managed to elevate the work from the type of compendium usually directed toward alumni and prospective donors to a work that can be enjoyed by historians, librarians, and the general public.—*Libby Hertenstein, William T. Jerome Library, Bowling Green State University*

Wolfgang Ernst. *Stirrings in the Archives: Order from Disorder*. Translated by Adam Siegel. Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015. vi, 102p. $75. ISBN 9781442253957

Be warned: *Stirrings in the Archives* is dense. Wolfgang Ernst's erudite, citation-stuffed monograph rests upon a basic tenet of media archaeology: that the material form of *what* is archived, and the structure of *how* it is archived, affect the ways in which a given archive has been, is, and will be accessed and interpreted. Deconstruction is at work everywhere in this book, comparing and contrasting individual

1. Note that back issues of *The Quarto* are available online at http://clements.umich.edu/Quarto/quarto-back.php [accessed 26 July 2016].

vs. collective records; presence vs. absence; hidden vs. public; chance vs. by design; abundance vs. scarcity; and so on. Ernst draws fruitfully upon the work of theorists (Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida), material-cultural historians (Natalie Zemon Davis, Carlo Ginzburg), and premodernist scholars (Ernst Kantorowicz, Stephen Greenblatt) alike. The result is a hefty series of short essays—connected but distinct(ive)—on various aspects of archival theory.

Ernst's words often beg for multiple (re)readings. Some for their complexity: "Archival operations not only are predicated on allowing immense databases to speak, they also give a textual voice to the silence of a forgotten reality" (5). Others, for their sheer poetry:

> memory storage cannot function as history's foundation: it is much more its abyss. Whether in the museum, the library, or the archive, the past is always in retreat, lost in an endless flight. Wandering archaeologists and historians peregrinate, gathering up the skeletal remains of past societies, browsing the shelves of death, seeking truth through excavation and research reports (36).

Some sections are fearsomely brilliant. For instance, in his Foucauldian chapter 15, "In History's Arsenal," Ernst's pithy constructions are some of his most effective: consider "Power means *what* remembers, rather than who" (53), or "Censorship is the surest guarantee of archiving" (54). Through these, the reader immediately grasps the essence of how the archive has operated in different political and administrative regimes. Chapter 9, "DRACULArchiv," is similarly striking for its sudden move from how "writing in ink that dries like blood, the historian-author drains their subject" to how "the archive […] consumes the historian while writing: it drains him of his physical substance; he gives his blood when he writes his history" (25–26).

Perhaps the book's most poignant theme is the reminder that archival accumulation is always accidental or incomplete. Ernst cites Arlette Farge's struggle "with the physical defects of the documents" and reflects that, for Michel de Certeau, "[h]istory's absence […] is reflected in the archive, which despite its floods of paper is not a hoard of wealth but an unforgettable lack, [… a] state of going missing" (18). Consequently, for Ernst, the reality of human beings' "contingent existences" make for an archive that is "a collection of sketches, the historiograffiti of lives that have survived only in a few lines or pages" (46).

Ernst's perspective is particularly compelling in his analysis of the present digital/virtual milieu, where data and storage are dynamic rather than static, ever more is being recorded, and physical space is no constraint. As he points out, "the Internet

[…] does not recognize a final edition but permanent revision" (92–93). Yet despite the ability to constantly accrue material, all archives, *especially* digital ones, are fundamentally pixilated in a way that obviates full understanding.

He conjures the archive almost as a collection of half-tone dots: look at any half-tone image with a loupe strong enough, and it refracts into a pattern of individual dots that defy legibility. The spaces between data points are Ernst's "anarchive," that "vast field of the unsaid" (18). Then there is disappearance, disintegration: "Entropy is very much the other side of the archive" (88). The inevitable lacunae in sources, and the slow undoing of their organization, are natural in the archival world. How terrifying, how humbling, to recall that survival is never guaranteed. How melancholy, how urgent, to realize that it is up to us to save raw data from obliteration.

Yet *Stirrings in the Archives* is neither relatable nor pragmatic. Confounding the efficacy of this otherwise incisive work is the fact that Ernst presents dozens of conceptions of the "archive," but hardly lands on one for more than a second. The "archive" is "the general system of the formation and transformation of statements" (8); "less some sort of neutral accumulation of information […] than a medial outcome of temporal events" (12); "an economic place for symbol circulation" (29); a "bunker" (30); a "Wunderkammer" (39); and "the difference of authority" (50). At various points, the "archive" both is and is not a state mechanism; both is and

is not collective memory or narrative; is noisy but can also be silent; is both dead and alive. Archives are, somewhere, "places of temptation" that "evoke fantasies of recovered memory" (17), and elsewhere, "an attempt at fixing regulated processes to a continuing order of memory storage" (88) (… what?).

Certainly the abstract "archive" can be all of these things, and more. And certainly this mirrors reality in a way, for there *are* many *types* of archives. But the cumulative effect can be overwhelming for those approaching this book from the grassroots of everyday operational labor. The concrete case studies that populate professional conferences, and the day-to-day anecdotes that enliven listservs, are almost nowhere to be found here. This is an "archive" that is almost entirely imagined, construed, theorized—not the messy real world of linear footage and MPLP. Ernst rarely invokes the archetypal archivist or the researcher actually encountering and working with records (even if for one provocative moment he admits that "[a]t times readers break into tears while at the monitor; moments such as these do not figure in theories of the archive" [82].) In the face of so many simultaneous abstractions, the reader—accustomed as he or she is to "processing" as simplification and sense-making rather than as layering and complication—may be forgiven for wondering if the book's subtitle is actually reversed, evoking *dis*order out of order. Ernst's slippery, additive, singular "archive" wobbles constantly before one's eyes—like half-set Jell-O®—so that one has to just abandon any hope of stability and spoon it all down, relishing the sensory experience but not expecting a full meal out of it.

Still, despite (or because of) its kaleidoscopic lens and linguistic mastery, *Stirrings* is a gratifying read, giving the professional an expansive (if mind-bending) understanding of the importance of the daily work: archiving is/as not just the rote accumulation and ordering of records, but is/as the navigation and control of space and time, and the production and erasure of history and culture.—*Simran Thadani, Executive Director, Letterform Archive, San Francisco, California*