



Book Review

Review of Interrogation to Integration: Centering Social Justice in Special Collections, Archives and Preservation

Bethany Peterkin, MLIS, *Capilano University*

ABSTRACT

Review of *Interrogation to integration: Centering social justice in special collections, archives, and preservation*, edited by Kim Hoffman and Rachel Makarowski. Association of College and Research Libraries, 2025. 396 pp. ISBN 979-8-89255-559-3.

KEYWORDS

Social justice, archives, DEI, library instruction

SUGGESTED CITATION

Peterkin, B. (2026). Review of *Interrogation to integration: Centering social justice in special collections, archives and preservation*, K. Hoffman and R. Makarowski (Eds). *Journal of New Librarianship*, 11(1), 39–43. <https://doi.org/10.33011/newlibs/20/5>

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.



A common narrative within academic libraries and archival spaces is that they operate as neutral spaces: a perspective that has long been celebrated. The reality, however, is a bit more complicated. The edited volume *Interrogation to Integration: Centering Social Justice in Special Collections, Archives and Preservation* challenges this assumption by revealing how these spaces, dedicated to knowledge preservation, have historically memorialized the narratives of individuals in positions of power, thereby reinforcing systematic inequities. Across twenty-three chapters, contributors from across the United States critically examine this legacy of harmful narrative and offer strategies for emphasizing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in special collections, archives, and preservation practices. The book uses case studies, research findings, and practical methods to guide librarians, archivists, and other information professionals. It is especially useful for those committed to social justice work, even when resources are limited.

Introduction

The editors open *Interrogation to Integration* by situating this collection within the broader context of inequities that are deeply ingrained in archival and library practices. They emphasize that while the professions have historically served as a tool for preserving the status quo, individual practitioners can take on more practical, sustainable steps to center underrepresented voices. Hoffman and Makarowski encourage small, scalable interventions that may be incorporated into daily workflows rather than projects that require substantial grant funding. Their approach reinforces the idea that social justice work is not optional, but rather a foundational aspect of professional practice. The editors also stress the importance of integrating social justice into daily routines to strengthen DEI work in higher education and in doing so, these initiatives may become more resilient to political pressures and institutional resistance.

About the Editors

Editors Kim Hoffman and Rachel Makarowski are both experienced library professionals and have dutifully curated this book with complementary expertise. Hoffman is the Digital Curation & Preservation Librarian at Hamilton College and has made a commitment to embed DEI principles into preservation and digital stewardship. Makarowski, the Special Collections Librarian at Miami University, incorporates extensive experience in instruction, outreach, and social justice into special collections. Together the editors bring together a diverse group of archivists, librarians, and academics, whose credentials span MLIS, PhD, and MA degrees in library science, history, and museum studies. Each author reflects how their identities and professional experiences have shaped their approaches to archival and library practice and their contribution to this book.

Summary of Contents

Interrogation to Integration is organized into five thematic sections: research, description, preservation and access, outreach, and instruction. Each part offers both reflective discussions and actionable strategies for readers to engage and be inspired by.

Part 1: Research

In the first section, the book explores methods for identifying and addressing archival silences. Chapter 1 features an interview study at the University of Illinois that focuses on systemic gaps in archival subspecialties and provides suggestions on how to amplify underrepresented voices. Next, Chapter 2 examines the power dynamics encoded in maps and demonstrates how both real and fictional cartography can challenge dominant narratives. Chapter 3 showcases how a grant-supported project at the Abraham Pollen Archives uncovered contributions from women and BIPOC medical practitioners and offers guidance for similarly under-resourced contexts, as demonstrated at the Pollen Archives. Chapter 4 documents reparative work at the University of Maryland through the Universities Studying Slavery initiative, which highlights an archivist's role in leading institutional reflection. The last chapter of Part 1 presents a digital project connecting records across regions to reveal Black family histories in the Delmarva Peninsula and emphasizes collaboration as a catalyst for innovation. Collectively, Chapters 1-5 illustrate both the depth of inequity in archival collections while also offering pragmatic approaches to addressing it.

Part 2: Description

The second section of the book emphasizes reparative and culturally competent cataloguing practices, as is noted in Chapter 6, which provides a step-by-step approach to integrate inclusive descriptive practices at the Rockefeller Archive Center and includes strategies for securing institutional buy-in. Two case studies are examined in Chapter 7, each focusing on dehumanizing archival descriptions that were corrected in an effort to underscore the responsibility of information professionals in restorative work. Chapter 8 provides guidance on how to implement reparative description practices across catalogue records, with emphasis on balancing specific procedural instructions with broader recommendations applicable to other institutions.

Part 3: Preservation and Access

The third section of *Interrogation to Integration* highlights inclusive stewardship practices. The first chapter of the section, Chapter 9, recounts rapid-response preservation initiatives following the 2016 Pulse nightclub shooting and the professional and emotional challenges that came with preserving the materials during such a community crisis. Chapter 10 details a digital transcription and captioning project for poetry recordings, showing how

inclusive digital practices may enhance accessibility. Barriers to equity are discussed in Chapter 11, specifically in computer music archives, where a crowd-sourced linked data catalogue demonstrates how technology can highlight marginalized voices. This case study demonstrates how technology can be harnessed to disrupt traditional hierarchies.

Part 4: Outreach

The fourth section explores strategies for engaging underrepresented populations. Chapter 12 emphasizes sustainability and scalability and describes DEI-focused lesson plans that were developed with limited resources. Chapter 13 demonstrates how cross-campus partnerships can improve stewardship and uncover hidden voices. Chapter 14 highlights initiatives at Princeton University that engage students while confronting entrenched Eurocentric narratives. Decentering acquisition practices is the focus of Chapter 15, with an emphasis on community relationships over traditional donor hierarchies. Chapter 16 presents a model for encouraging first-generation and underrepresented students in archival research. Chapters 12-16 collectively provide examples of how outreach can advance equity while fostering community engagement.

Part 5: Instruction

The final part of the book focuses on pedagogy and critical engagement. Chapter 17 examines class sessions in which students examine legacies of race and colonialism in collections. The Personal Archive Assignment is introduced in Chapter 18, which prompts students to reflect on personal identity and archival silences. Chapter 19 describes a critical pedagogy discussion group, and Chapter 20 outlines courses that encourage students to challenge assumptions about collection neutrality. Chapter 21 discusses the systematic integration of DEI principles in instruction sessions, and Chapter 22 details a semester-long course on archival bias that employed iterative design and inclusive principles. Chapter 23 illustrates how local Jewish history collections can be used to teach social justice theory. As a unit, Chapters 17-23 provides a comprehensive toolkit for embedding social justice in library instruction.

Taken together, these sections offer a robust and multifaceted framework for integrating DEI principles across library and archival work.

Strengths

One of *Interrogation to Integration's* greatest strengths lies in how it blends theoretical perspectives with practical strategies and reflective case studies. Any reader may gain a nuanced understanding of structural inequities along with actionable guidance for implementing changes in their own workspaces, classrooms, or institutions. The breadth of institutional contexts, project implementations, and methodological approaches ensures that information professionals at all career stages can find relevant insights. Low-cost, scalable interventions

make this volume accessible and highly useful. Author positionality statements and reflective insights help to enhance the book's ethical focus, demonstrating accountability and transparency in practice.

Limitations

A potential drawback is that the book focuses on U.S.-based institutions. While strategies and case studies are broadly applicable, the inclusion of international perspectives or Indigenous archival practices could have strengthened the discussion further. Additionally, while some chapters provide step-by-step guidance, others are more descriptive and require readers to extrapolate strategies independently.

Conclusion

Interrogation to Integration: Centering Social Justice in Special Collections, Archives and Preservation is an essential addition to any library's collection for its practical contributions to inclusive librarianship and archival work. By weaving together research, case studies, and practical strategies, the book underscores that social justice is a central responsibility, not simply an optional endeavor. Librarians, archivists, and instructors seeking to integrate DEI principles into research, description, preservation, outreach, or instruction will find this book instructive, insightful, and inspiring. Despite minor limitations, *Interrogation to Integration* successfully illuminates actionable approaches to dismantling systemic inequities and centering marginalized voices, making it an indispensable resource for professionals committed to creating more just and equitable library and archival spaces.