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The Future of Digital Data, Heritage and Curation in a More-than-Human World. Fiona R. Cameron. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2021. xii, 301 pp. 9780367711641

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Technological advances, the Internet, and social media have all ushered in an era of exponential increases in data production and so, too, a flourishing of digital cultural heritage. As Fiona R. Cameron states in *The Future of Digital Data, Heritage and Curation in a More-than-Human World*, "Our very existence has become datafied. Digital data is omnipresent in what we do and how we experience life: how we record our lives, how we spend our leisure time, how we conduct our work and love lives" (p. 2). This bottomless sea of digital information is the backdrop and impetus for Cameron's latest contribution to the cultural heritage field. In this book, Cameron, who is an associate professor at Western Sydney University, brings her expertise in critical museum studies, digital cultural heritage, environmental post-humanities, and climate change to bear on ideas of curating and collecting digital heritage now and in the future. Throughout, she problematizes all that constitutes this specific type of heritage. Using contemporary examples – including archives professionals' bugbears like Trump's prolific tweets – she critiques the prevailing trends in digital heritage and our traditional ideas of objecthood (p. 2). Though the text gives little concrete direction on the practicalities of preserving digitized and born-digital heritage records, and the prose can be dense, the patient reader will nonetheless find that Cameron's philosophical treatment of a complicated topic is laudably current, technologically informed, and ecologically and socially minded.

This book is nine chapters in length, including the introduction and conclusion. Cameron starts by framing the monograph's topics and theoretical underpinnings. Early in the text, she defines digital cultural heritage (DCH) as "all digital data that a society sees as of enduring value that is important enough to retain, keep,

preserve and pass on to future generations" (p. 27). She goes on in chapter 2 to explain its history and its eventual acceptance as official heritage by UNESCO in 2003. Cameron also brings up further UNESCO conferences that have continued to grapple with and refine the organization's understanding of this "intangible" heritage (p. 34). Her portrayal of UNESCO is not a glowing one, however; she critiques the organization's approach to DCH preservation in this chapter and throughout the text. She takes issue with its Western-centric focus, and she refutes its propensity to freeze digital heritage data as "forms of information and cultural expression" that are fixed in time rather than evolving and fluid (p. 46). In chapter 3, she levels this same critique at the whole modern heritage sector. She writes, "The desire to fix and quarantine data in such a way is a distinctly heritage disposition" (p. 79). In short, Cameron is challenging heritage and information professionals to view the whole lifespan of a digital object's use and reuse as part of its cultural value. This challenge is an important throughline in her text.

Chapter 4 takes a step back from this critique about how the heritage sector treats digital objects to consider more generally the concept of the object, or objecthood, and its application in DCH. Cameron explores ideas of objecthood through a series of examples. The most compelling of these is the whole apparatus of tangible and intangible technical objects that made up the patented system through which the late scientist Stephen Hawking functioned and communicated (as he suffered from motor neuron disease). She talks about the wide range and types of objects encapsulated in that system: "All of these objects collectively as heritage are representative of Hawking's genius, of technological innovation and therefore representative of his life at particular historical moments" (p. 116). Through this example, Cameron is essentially calling on archivists and other heritage professionals to consider the whole system in which a digital object is enmeshed as integral to its meaning and interpretation. Finally, having laid out this and other examples, she concludes that, although DCH might have "object-like characteristics," she prefers to see it as "post-object forms operating in experience, in process, made up of diverse coordinates" (p. 118). Cameron's text is imbued with theoretical critiques such as these about how we look at digital heritage and its component objects; bit by bit, these critiques nudge readers' thinking, encouraging them to look at DCH in different ways and from different perspectives. In the archives and museum realm, this may mean a shift to conceiving of digital objects as part of what Cameron terms broader "heritage

schemas" and valuing their context, interactions, and reuse as essential to their description and interpretation (p. 118).

In chapters 5 and 6, examples once again help Cameron frame complex theoretical propositions. In the first of these, she draws on theory from a variety of disciplines and discusses the environmental ramifications of preserving great swathes of heritage data. It is vital for us, as heritage professionals, to consider how the mining and processing of materials for software and hardware impact the earth as we continue to move forward into a digitally rich future world. That Cameron acknowledges this is a strength of her text. She also advocates for using eco-curating processes and viewing digitized and born-digital data as new types of "ecological compositions." In chapter 6, Cameron uses further examples – many derived from well-known museums and their operating practices – to frame her vision for collecting born-digital records in cultural heritage institutions in the future (p. 175).

In the final two chapters, Cameron focuses on the practice of curating digital data and looks, as the title of chapter 7 states, both "inside the archive and out in the world" and then, in chapter 8, onward into the "technosphere." Building on her idea of digital objects as ecological compositions that are unbounded and evolving, Cameron explores its implications for practices in the archives. She proposes an "open and process-based curatorial system" to support dynamic digital heritage and suggests collecting practices centred on intent (pp. 200, 206–7). Here, she is urging archivists and curators to move away from a central focus on "curating . . . based on sole authorship, object-centered thinking, to establish collecting objectives that respect the dynamism of DCH and aim to capture a snapshot of this rather than isolate original artifacts (pp. 200–225). According to Cameron, the intent for the snapshot or cut into this dynamic heritage would then be spelled out in associated documentation (pp. 212–13). Though this approach to curating vast seas of digital data has its merits, its use of subjectivity as a basis for collecting may be concerning to archivists. Finally, following on these ideas, in chapter 8, Cameron turns to the widening array of data creators and argues for a role for non-human and "more-than-human" agents in heritage data creation. As she provocatively notes, "The notion of human-ness as the central feature in heritage making is displaced" (p. 227). This has interesting implications for the archival field, where creatorship has historically been considered of central importance. At what point, for instance, might

we consider AI technology to be a creator of cultural heritage? Again, Cameron is asking us to reimagine the very foundations of the DCH sector.

In all, Cameron's text is a critical and philosophical hashing out of what digital cultural heritage is and ought to be. Through it, she argues for a shift in our thinking about preserving digital data as something fixed at its point of origin. This reconceptualization, and its implications for the practices of curating and archiving, is impressively broad in scope. Her perspectives throughout are grounded in multidisciplinary theory and enlivened through a praiseworthy selection of timely and thought-provoking examples from the museum world and popular culture. These examples will inform curators and archivists who are considering how to collect, document, and interpret digital heritage and will challenge us to break with traditional methods of viewing DCH as comprised of bounded, static objects. Finally, her pointed critiques of UNESCO's approach to DCH and its broad "regime of world heritage-making" are provocative and important. These critiques, coupled with Cameron's considerations about the ecological implications of DCH and the systems that support it, make this text socially and environmentally aware.

This text is not without its problems, though. If the reader wants practical advice on how to preserve a digital object or set up a retention schedule for born-digital records, this is not the text for them. Also, there is overlap between the chapters that can feel at times as if disparate academic articles were regrouped into book form. And, without a doubt, this is a dense read. There is considerable work involved in turning its pages. A propensity toward long lists of terms and an overuse of the phrase *digital cultural heritage* (which would be better referred to downstream as DCH) are at least somewhat to blame for this. It is possible that these aspects of the author's prose may limit the appeal of this text outside a niche academic audience. Nonetheless, issues of readability are most noticeable in the introduction and conclusion of this book, when Cameron draws together the various threads of her argument, but less apparent in the other chapters, which are more focused and limited in scope. When language does not frustrate understanding, there are gems of ideas to be found here that will require those in the field of digital curation and born-digital archiving to step back from what they are doing, to view it anew, to consider what it is they are preserving and for what purpose. In short, this text may irritate you, but it will make you think. It may even make you think differently about digital heritage than you did before.