How to Write a Book Review for the
American Archivist

Specific guidelines for book reviews for the American Archivist include the following:

• Reviews should be approximately 1,500 words in length
• Reviewer must identify title, author or editor(s), city of publication, publisher, date of publication, number of pages, ISBN number (properly formatted), cloth or paper, and price.
• Discuss the author’s credentials and background.
• Briefly describe the contents of the book. Do not retell the story but provide an overview and summary.
• A book review is a personal statement. Discuss your reaction to the book.
• Evaluate the book’s strengths and weaknesses.
• Discuss the book within an archival context, its relationship to archives and its significance for the discipline.
• Compare the book to similar works
• Respond to the author’s thesis and opinions.
• Do not focus on minor typographical or factual errors unless the work is significantly compromised.
• Evaluate the book as a whole in terms of its usefulness to archivists and users of archives materials.

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