This compilation is edited by Donald Hawkins, a blogger and writer at Information Today, the publisher of the collection. The intended audience for the book is very broad indeed, namely:

- Consumers, or non-information professionals, who want to know how to go about establishing a digital archive for their family or personal use
- Academic researchers investigating digital scholarship
- Libraries of all types – research, public, and academic – that serve consumers and researchers
- Historians and authors collecting biographical information
- Public officials and local historical societies.

In other words Hawkins is aiming at just about anyone with any interest or concern with digital information, ranging from the amateur to professional curators and historians. The extremely diverse styles and focus of the individual chapters reflect this astonishingly broad sweep of potential readers.

The authors of the 13 chapters are almost all based in the US, with the exception of one contribution from Richard Banks in Cambridge, UK (albeit an employee of the US multinational, Microsoft). Authors are a mixture of practitioners and consultants, with a sprinkling of academics. The first three chapters introduce the concept of personal digital archives in the simplest of terms. The contribution by Mike Ashenfelder of the Library of Congress provides probably the most pragmatic and useful advice to anyone faced with a personal digital collection. For instance, on selecting photos, he suggests ‘select the nicest ones, the ones worth keeping, and delete the rest. Does anyone really need 50 photos of clouds or 200 photos of autumn leaves?’ Subsequent chapters consider tools and services, legal issues, social media and reuse of data.

A professional reader who perseveres through some very routine territory, will be rewarded with an absolute gem. Jason Zalinger, Nathan Freier and Ben Shneiderman’s account of the analysis of a personal email archive makes for really fascinating reading. The writing is very vivid and certainly brings to life the challenges faced by digital archivists and historians using those archives. The remaining chapters are much more scholarly and/or more technical in tone, including a chapter providing an extensive literature review of personal digital archiving.

Given the wide-ranging intended audience, it is not surprising that for this reviewer some chapters really hit the mark, whereas others failed to connect at all. For anyone concerned with personal digital archives there will be content that is worth reading, but do not expect that all will satisfy.

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