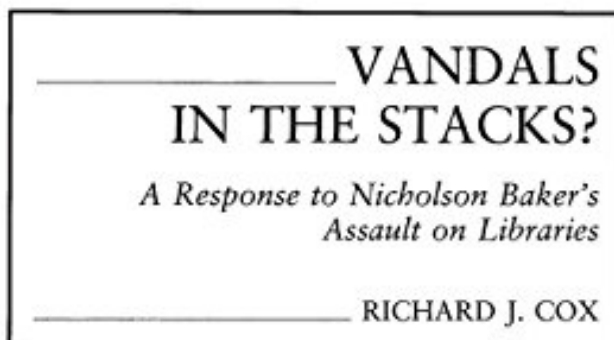


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Vandals in the Stacks?: A Response to Nicholson Baker's Assault on Libraries (Contributions in Librarianship and Information Science)

Richard J. Cox

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Richard J. Cox : Vandals in the Stacks?: A Response to Nicholson Baker's Assault on Libraries (Contributions in Librarianship and Information Science) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth

my time, and all praised Vandals in the Stacks?: A Response to Nicholson Baker's Assault on Libraries (Contributions in Librarianship and Information Science):

20 of 24 people found the following review helpful. A necessary reply to Nicholson Baker's "Double Fold" By Mark Howells This book provides a reasoned and erudite response from the professional librarian and archivist community to Nicholson Baker's "Double Fold". Think that Baker over-made his case against the CIA/library conspiracy to destroy our print heritage? You're right - he did. In the interests of writing a ripping good yarn, Baker played fast and loose with the facts. Remember, he's a novelist, not an investigative reporter. Richard Cox brings years of professional archival practice and scholarship to bear on the fallacies of "Double Fold". Cox rationalizes the debate by asking profound questions about how society should decide what it preserves among competing wants with limited resources, the best methods for preservation, and what the implications for Baker's solution of "saving everything" will be in our electronic age. Most interesting perhaps is Cox's review of Nicholson Baker's public statements on the TV and lecture circuit regarding his "Double Fold" crusade. Obviously, consistency is not one of Baker's hobgoblins. He seems to have made a career out of repeatedly contradicting what he wrote in "Double Fold". Of extreme value in Cox's response is his focus on how Baker has brought the previously private library science debate on what materials to preserve and how into the public realm. Although he disagrees with Baker's caricature of librarians, Cox argues that the public perceptions of librarianship and archival responsibilities should be of extreme concern to the profession. Cox doesn't just do a hatchet job. He uses "Double Fold" with all its warts as part of his graduate courses for archivists. Cox believes that Baker has done the profession a favor by shaking it up a bit and bringing preservation issues into public debate. The only criticism I have of the book is that its arguments are at times redundant.

Libraries and archives have violated their public trust, argues Nicholson Baker in his controversial book *Double Fold*, by destroying traditional books, newspapers, and other paper-based collections. Baker's powerful and persuasive book is wrong and misleading, and Cox critiques it point by point, questioning his research, his assumptions, and his arguments about why and how newspapers, books, and other collections are selected and maintained. *Double Fold*, which reads like a history of libraries and archives, is not a history at all, but a journalistic account that is often based on fanciful and far-flung assertions and weak data. The present book provides an opportunity to understand how libraries and archives view their societal mandate, the nature of their preservation and documentary functions, and the complex choices and decisions that librarians and archivists face. Libraries and archives are not simple warehouses for the storage of objects to be occasionally called upon by a scholar, but they play vital roles in determining and shaping a society's knowledge and documentation.

From Booklist Novelist and essayist Baker burst onto the library scene with his famous (infamous?) 1994 New Yorker essay attacking libraries for discarding old card catalogs. In 2000, Baker attacked libraries for discarding old newspapers, also in The New Yorker, and then a year later in his book *Double Fold: Libraries and the Assault on Paper* (Random, 2001). Archivist and University of Pittsburgh professor Cox began responding to Baker early on, first with some sympathy regarding the historical value of our old catalogs but then with growing dismay at Baker's "save everything" mentality. The Society of American Archivists requested an answer to Baker's book, and that grew into this book. Unlike Baker's work, which was aimed at the general public, Cox's response is aimed at professional librarians and archivists. This is a valuable book for anyone who is queried about Baker's attacks. Baker has sounded an alarm, inspiring significant public concern. Here are the foundations for a calm, reasoned, professional response. James D. Anderson Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "[o]ffers the reader a reasoned and balanced account of the issues raised by Baker. Assuming the general public is interested in a reasoned account, Cox will be successful in his objective of bringing to the wider public audience his concerns about the future of the archival record. Regardless of the public interest, however, he has given professionals concerned with the issues of the preservation of society's record a solid base from which to continue the discussions."-portal: Libraries and the Academy..."a must-read for all librarians."-American Libraries "Reading "Vandals" will help you to decide where you stand on a range of preservation issues, and help you determine whether or not to jettison that bulky card catalog. Very Good."-The Shy Librarian "The Society of American Archivists requested an answer to Baker's book, and that grew into this book. Unlike Baker's work, which was aimed at the general public, Cox's response is aimed at professional librarians and archivists. This is a valuable book for anyone who is queried about Baker's attacks. Baker has sounded an alarm, inspiring significant concern. Here are the foundations for a calm, reasoned, professional response."-Booklist/Professional Reading "offers the reader a reasoned and balanced account of the issues raised by Baker. Assuming the general public is interested in a reasoned account, Cox will be successful in his objective of bringing to the wider public audience his concerns about the future of the archival record. Regardless of the public interest, however, he has given professionals concerned with the issues of the preservation of society's record a solid base from which to continue the discussions."-portal: Libraries and the Academy?...a must-read for all librarians.??American Libraries?...a must-read for all librarians.?-American Libraries?Reading "Vandals" will help

you to decide where you stand on a range of preservation issues, and help you determine whether or not to jettison that bulky card catalog. Very Good.?"-The Shy Librarian?"The Society of American Archivists requested an answer to Baker's book, and that grew into this book. Unlike Baker's work, which was aimed at the general public, Cox's response is aimed at professional librarians and archivists. This is a valuable book for anyone who is queried about Baker's attacks. Baker has sounded an alarm, inspiring significant concern. Here are the foundations for a calm, reasoned, professional response.?"-Booklist/Professional Reading?"[o]ffers the reader a reasoned and balanced account of the issues raised by Baker. Assuming the general public is interested in a reasoned account, Cox will be successful in his objective of bringing to the wider public audience his concerns about the future of the archival record. Regardless of the public interest, however, he has given professionals concerned with the issues of the preservation of society's record a solid base from which to continue the discussions.?"-portal: Libraries and the Academy..,"a must-read for all librarians."-American LibrariesAbout the AuthorRICHARD J. COX is Professor, School of Information Sciences, University of Pittsburgh.