

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Robert L. Clark ed., *Archive-Library Relations* (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1976); and Lawrence J. McCrank ed., *Archives and Library Administration: Divergent Traditions and Common Concerns* (New York: Haworth Press, 1986).

## Archives Alive: Expanding Engagement with Public Library Archives and Special Collections

By Diantha Dow Schull. Chicago: ALA Editions, 2015. xxvii, 324 pp. Softcover. \$85.00.  
ISBN 978-0-8389-1335-2.

Full disclosure: as an archivist working in a public library, I get incensed when others, who don't work in public libraries, tell us what we should be doing and how we should be doing it. I am not alone in feeling this way. Working in a public library, the assumption is often that we are not real archivists, that we do not have the proper training or preferred background. Otherwise, we would be employed elsewhere. Clearly, I have a chip on my shoulder. Before I first opened *Archives Alive: Expanding Engagement with Public Library Archives and Special Collections* by Diantha Dow Schull, I had my doubts and concerns. I shouldn't have. While I do not necessarily agree with all of the author's assumptions about the development of programming in public library archives and special collections, Schull makes no attempt to direct what we should do. Instead she shares over a hundred examples of programming triumphs in public library archives and special collections.

As stated in her biography, Schull serves as an advisor in the cultural heritage sector and is a consultant with her own firm. She is a museum professional and recently served as president of Libraries for the Future. Previously, she worked as special consultant for Interpretive Programs at the Library of Congress, and as director of exhibitions at the New York Public Library, the beacon of successful public libraries. Schull has largely held administrative positions and worked as a manager, a project director, and an evaluator; however, her résumé does not indicate that she has ever worked a reference desk or processed a collection. Her view is from the top down, not the bottom up. Nevertheless, this does not negatively impact her understanding of or appreciation for the unique challenges of that world.

Seventy-seven interviews with information professionals, including librarians and archivists, who work directly with or oversee public programs involving unique or rare materials comprise the examples of public programming featured in *Archives Alive*. As a result of these interviews, Schull presents us with

an understanding of the constraints under which many public library special collections and archives exist. In her introduction, she discusses the isolation, the lack of funding, and the conflicting loyalties that individuals working in this setting experience. Daily, we feel the tension between taking care of our collections (and preparing them to last the ages) and making them accessible to fifth graders. Increasing our visibility in the community is not just a worthwhile venture; it can be a desperate attempt at survival. Those in public libraries feel the pressure even more than our colleagues in other settings. We all compete for resources, but public libraries compete against fire and police departments as well as homeless shelters—institutions we do not want budget cuts to befall. The majority of people who enter our buildings every day for book groups, community meetings, or to borrow DVDs, may not know that we exist, let alone what we can offer them. Effective programming can lead to more patrons and donations (both of collections and of money) and provide job security.

Things are tough all over, but in her introduction, Schull spotlights the conditions that plague archives and special collections in public libraries in particular. It is affirming that she does this from the perspective of someone who does not work in a public library. It is nice to hear someone else agree that, yes, we have considerable staff and time constraints. Unlike many other departments in public libraries that do a wide variety of programming, such as the children's department, archives and special collections are often responsible for much broader back-of-house duties, such as processing collections. Few children's librarians have to pick between cataloging board books and hosting storytime.

I disagree, however, with Schull's belief that there is "a shift in how archivists and special collections librarians regard the general public and a shift in how they are organizing and reorganizing their resources to meet public users' needs" (p. xxvii). Because I have worked as an archivist for nearly thirty years, discussions about this subject have been ever-present in my professional experiences. Technological advances have, without a doubt, broadened the horizons of some types of programs and perhaps amplified the discussions along with these programs. Public library archives and special collections are a diverse crowd that can be affiliated with many professional organizations. For example, meetings of the Genealogy and Local History committees of the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) History Section of the American Library Association offer discussions of programs such as those Schull presents, including Allen County (Indiana) Public Library's "Community Album" (pp. 178–180), which she references in this volume. While the History Section meetings welcome all attendees regardless of their institutions' types or sizes, it can be a small group. Perhaps we are not spending enough time telling each other about our plans and our accomplishments? For example, I had never heard of the program at

Enoch Pratt, the largest public library in Maryland where I live, which Schull references. Perhaps this is my fault; nevertheless, as a group, perhaps we have not been loud enough, even when our programming is discussed at national meeting venues.

Following the introduction, the book is divided into ten chapters arranged alphabetically by nine types of programs, in addition to a chapter on “Emerging Institutional Models.” Included are the obvious programs: exhibitions, lectures, and oral histories; along with the more creative, such as the chapter, “Art and Archives,” and the more trendy, “Interactive Archives.” Each chapter begins with an introductory narrative, followed by several case studies. The author presents an overview of each case, followed by a brief discussion of “Challenges” and “Future Plans” and, occasionally, “Related Programs.” In the chapter “National and International Programs,” Schull discusses several institutions’ involvements in Archives Week or History Day, though much more briefly. Purposefully missing are any programs labeled “genealogy,” which, as Schull states, could be a standalone work (though a family history program does sneak in attached to its local history cousin). However, any public engagement that documents a community or encourages someone to tell her or his story is creating materials for genealogists. Public library archivists who interact almost exclusively with genealogists should not overlook this work.

Schull makes it perfectly clear that her choice of institutions “is not based on a rigorous survey” (p. xxvi), but on a “scan of the landscape” (p. xxiv), even if, at times, the landscape includes major cities with New York and Boston being dominant. She does not include examples from each state, nor does she represent every public library size and demographic. However, this is not a comparative study. The layout of the book keeps this from being obvious, tedious, or disheartening. It only becomes apparent if you study the table of contents or make a grid, as I did. Initially, I was disappointed that the discussion of the “Local and Family History Lecture Series” came from the Boston Public Library. Don’t other libraries with less notoriety and resources do this programming as well? After greater introspection, however, I concluded that Boston Public Library proved to be an effective example of programming that includes family and local history lectures; while this might not have been Schull’s intention, it does demonstrate that even the “big boys” in the field still use such tried and true programming techniques. In a world of digital pressure, an excellent lecture series still plays an important role. It is a comfort that it is not just the programming of the poor, the understaffed, or the uncreative.

Although you will not sit down with on a snowy night and read this book from cover to cover, you will go back to it time and time again as a reference book. If you work in a special collection or archives and need some inspiration, it is here. If you need to sell an idea to your director, supervisor, board, or other

stakeholder, it can support your case. If you need to convince yourself that there is hope and what we do matters, this will do it. It may be most useful to those who are new to the profession or who have oversight, but have never worked in the field. I will use it the next time I teach introduction to archives to undergraduates and genealogy librarianship to graduate students.

As mentioned previously, I am not convinced that our profession's outlook has changed, but this volume does give us increased exposure and does it well. It puts many of us in the position to sigh and envy what our colleagues can accomplish; it doesn't matter if it is a change in outlook or not, as an archivist in a public library, I am proud. I thank Schull for taking us out of the closet and highlighting what many of us have done and what we all hope we can do given just the right circumstances.

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## Rights in the Digital Era

Edited by Menzi L. Behrnd-Klodt and Christopher J. Prom. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2015. v, 238 pp. Softcover, PDF, and EPUB. Members \$29.99, nonmembers \$34.99. Softcover ISBN 1-931666-73-3; PDF ISBN 1-931666-74-1; EPUB ISBN 1-931666-75-X.

When asked to write a book review, it is often the case that one has not read the book. The reviewer must find time not just to write the review, but to read the book carefully. Thus, it was a pleasure to be asked to review *Rights in the Digital Era* as I already own a well-thumbed copy and am familiar with its contents in my role as an instructor of the privacy and copyright courses in the Society of American Archivists' Digital Archives Specialist (DAS) certificate curriculum.

*Rights in the Digital Era* is the second volume in the SAA's *Trends in Archives Practice* series, which aims to provide practitioners with brief, authoritative, user-centered resources about topics relating to the practical management of archival holdings in the digital age. This volume consists of four modules that address the challenging issues of copyright and privacy from an archival perspective in both analog and digital environments. The volume is available in print and electronic format. As well, one can purchase EPUBs of individual modules.

The four modules are "Understanding Copyright Law" by Heather Briston, "Balancing Access and Privacy in Manuscript Collections" and "Balancing Access and Privacy in the Records of Organizations" by Menzi L. Behrnd-Klodt, and