

Creating a Local History Archive at Your Public Library. By Faye Phillips. Chicago: ALA Editions, 2017. 161 pp. Index. Softcover. \$57.00.

In *Creating a Local History Archive at Your Public Library*, Faye Phillips draws on more than 30 years of experience as an archivist, librarian, and administrator to compile a practical manual for those looking to create a local history archives from the ground up. In her introduction, she describes the goal of her book: “to explain each element of managing a local history archives, illustrate why each element is important, and present steps to complete each element” (p. xiii). Phillips discusses each of these elements in clear and accessible language, using examples from the real world to illustrate her points. More than just a treatise on archival theory, this book serves as a concrete guide for anyone seeking answers to the nuts-and-bolts questions of creating a local history archives. While Phillips focuses on establishing a local history archives within a public library, the insight and advice that she offers would benefit archivists and librarians of all stripes, including those working in colleges and universities, government institutions, historical societies, museums, nonprofit and community archives, and other types of archival repositories.

The first step in establishing any kind of archives is to determine the archives’ mission and scope. What topics will the archives focus its collecting efforts on? What formats will the archives collect (e.g., manuscripts, organizational records, photographs, audiovisual materials)? What communities will the archives serve? What will the access policy be? Phillips thoroughly addresses each of these points in her first chapter, “Defining, Creating, and Developing a Local History Archive,” in which she lays the groundwork for creating an archives. After introducing the reader to the “history of local history” and then defining what should comprise a local history archives, Phillips walks step by step through each component of building one, including crafting mission statements, policies and procedures, and strategic long-term plans. Phillips emphasizes the need to account for change during the planning process: “financial challenges, technology, users’ needs, and laws . . . create change for libraries” (p. 12). By planning strategically, an archives can prepare itself for any hurdles that it might face down the road, and by establishing formal policies and procedures for all of its various functions, the archives rids itself of any guesswork when the time comes to make decisions regarding acquisitions, processing, access, and so on.

In her next chapter, “Collection Development Policies for the Local History Archive,” Phillips moves beyond the initial planning phase of creating an archives and delves into setting collection development priorities (what will the archives collect and what will it not collect?), defining user groups, establishing exhibits and outreach programming, and creating policies for gifts, deaccessions, and resource sharing. As in the previous chapter, Phillips emphasizes the importance of carefully planning the structure, substance, and activities of an archives before it opens to the public.

The third chapter, “Acquiring and Making Local History Collections Accessible,” is the real heart of this book. In this section, Phillips lays out the six aspects of gaining physical and intellectual control of an archives’ holdings: appraisal, legal transfer, accession, arrangement, description, and access. These are the key functions of an archives, and this will be the most useful chapter for readers seeking guidance on the daily operations

of an archives. Helpful take-aways in this chapter include a sample appraisal checklist, an outline of a standard deed of gift, an example of an accession worksheet, and examples of arrangement structures and container lists. Archivists or librarians looking for direction in a particular area of archival practice could adapt all of these sample documents; for example, the sample container list could be adapted and incorporated into an archival repository's finding aid template.

Phillips concludes with a brief chapter on the "Care of a Local History Archive." This moves the reader beyond the early planning stages of establishing an archives; past the day-to-day functions of accessioning, processing, reference, and outreach; and on to the long-term sustainability of an archival repository. Phillips discusses physical preservation and digitization—two critical functions of an archives, to be sure—but she also touches on some less glamorous but still important activities necessary to keep an archives running smoothly, such as housekeeping, climate control, and disaster preparedness. By keeping archival collections safe from pests, mold, water damage, changes in temperature and humidity, theft, and natural disasters, archivists ensure that those materials are available for research in perpetuity.

The greatest strength of this book is that, throughout, Phillips provides concrete examples of the topics she discusses, including excerpts from actual archival repositories' mission statements, strategic plans, resource sharing policies, and records schedules. She also includes illustrative photographs of archival spaces, such as the reading rooms at the Austin History Center and the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library in Washington, DC. Peppered throughout the book are useful definitions of key terms from the Society of American Archivists' *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*¹ and the *Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science*.² Each of these tangible components makes this book accessible to a wide-ranging audience, from those with little to no archival experience who are tasked with establishing an archives from scratch, to graduate students or early-career archivists who are just beginning to build their skill sets, to seasoned practitioners who could use this book to enhance their archival knowledge. Regardless of their level of experience, archivists, librarians, and other cultural heritage professionals can turn to this book as a one-stop guide to all aspects of archival practice. Phillips concludes her book by iterating her hope that "administrators, leaders, and staffs will find the book a manual of practice, and a guide to extensive information on providing access to, and caretaking of, local history collections" (p. 141). With her clear writing, extensive archival experience, and willingness to share real-world examples, Phillips accomplishes her goal entirely.

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NOTES

1. Richard Pearce-Moses, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005).
2. Joan M. Reitz, *Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science, ABC-CLIO*, http://www.abc-clio.com/ODLIS/odlis_A.aspx.