

Spring 2016

Book Review: Archives Alive: Expanding Engagement with Public Library Archives and Special Collections

Melanie Griffin

University of South Florida, griffinm@usf.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/tlscd>

 Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Scholar Commons Citation

Griffin, Melanie, "Book Review: Archives Alive: Expanding Engagement with Public Library Archives and Special Collections" (2016). *Special Collections Faculty and Staff Publications*. 42.
<http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/tlscd/42>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Tampa Library at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Special Collections Faculty and Staff Publications by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.

Sources

Professional Materials

Karen Antell, Editor

<i>Archives Alive: Expanding Engagement with Public Library Archives and Special Collections</i>	243
<i>Assessing Service Quality: Satisfying the Expectations of Library Customers</i>	244
<i>Club Programs for Teens: 101 Activities for the Entire Year</i>	244
<i>Digital Humanities in the Library: Challenges and Opportunities for Subject Specialists</i>	244
<i>Library Security: Better Communication, Safer Facilities</i>	245
<i>Mentoring A to Z</i>	246
<i>The Purpose-Based Library: Finding Your Path to Survival, Success, and Growth</i>	246
<i>Real-World Teen Services</i>	247
<i>Library Security: Better Communication, Safer Facilities</i>	247

Archives Alive: Expanding Engagement with Public Library Archives and Special Collections. By Diantha Dow Schull. Chicago: ALA Editions, 2015. 324 p. Paper \$79.00 (ISBN 978-0-8389-1335-2).

In *Archives Alive*, Diantha Dow Schull expertly demonstrates the strength, vitality, and importance of rare books, special collections, and archives departments located in public libraries rather than academic or research libraries. Schull's purpose is two-fold. First, she demonstrates the breadth and depth of special collections in public libraries; second, she demonstrates how twenty-first-century special collections departments work, frequently with technology, to increase engagement with the publics they serve. The scope is limited to special collections departments in American public libraries, but within these parameters, coverage is exhaustive and strikes an appropriate balance between activities at large, well-funded institutions and smaller departments with more modest resources.

The book is divided into ten thematically arranged chapters. Some chapters consider specific types of special collections and archives, such as art and oral history collections, whereas others consider innovative types of programming, including educational initiatives, exhibitions, and interactive archives. Each chapter follows the same format: an introduction that explores the chapter's topic in general, followed by 10–15 case studies exploring relevant exemplary programs at public libraries around the country. Each case study, although brief, provides an overview of the special collection or archive and its relationship to the parent public library and a thorough description of the program or initiative under consideration, with a focus on planning and implementation. Case studies conclude with a discussion of the challenges associated with the project and future plans. Almost all case studies note that ubiquitous budget and staffing cuts present a challenge; more helpful are the discussions of specific, less obvious challenges associated with particular programs, such as the logistics associated with mounting a public program that includes a dance component or the need to reallocate existing financial resources to pay for server space in support of digital projects.

The result of these carefully curated case studies is an impressive overview of the vital communities built between public library special collections departments and the constituents they serve. Further, the projects, partnerships, and initiatives described provide inspiration for the special collections librarian or archivist at any type of library; my copy now has many flags marking ideas for innovative programming that I would like to implement at my own (academic) library.—Melanie Griffin, *Special Collections Librarian, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida*

RUSQ considers for review reference books and professional materials of interest to reference and user services librarians. Serials and subscription titles normally are not reviewed unless a major change in purpose, scope, format, or audience has occurred. Reviews usually are three hundred to five hundred words in length. Views expressed are those of the reviewers and do not necessarily represent those of ALA. Please refer to standard directories for publishers' addresses.

Correspondence concerning these reviews should be addressed to "Professional Materials" editor, Karen Antell, Head of Outreach and Strategic Initiatives, Bizzell Memorial Library, University of Oklahoma, 401 West Brooks St., Room 146, Norman, OK 73019; e-mail: kantell@ou.edu.