Book reviews

Local History Reference Collections for Public Libraries

209

In this book, Marquis and Waggener strongly suggest that public libraries should create a local history reference collection. They differentiate between this and an archival collection. The specialist demands of archiving can overwhelm those wishing to create a local collection, when all that may be necessary is to create a collection of materials that the local community will appreciate and use. The users of a local collection are widely varied, ranging from school children through to historians and genealogists. What matters is to provide the materials to satisfy their needs, properly catalogued to allow for ready retrieval.

It is striking how patchy the provision of services can be in the USA, which elsewhere are taken for granted. Surely, after more than a century, are public libraries everywhere persuaded of the merits of a local history reference collection? But many localities have yet to begin. The authors distributed a survey to "thousands" of public libraries (how many, exactly?) asking about provision of local history reference collections, and received 650 responses. The survey drew some muted responses. For example, only a quarter of replying libraries used someone half-time or more with responsibility for the local collection, though there is no way to extrapolate from that figure how many local studies librarians there are in the USA. The survey missed the chance to ask about use of social media; some respondents indicated they maintained a blog or Facebook presence, but more details would have been welcome.

Rather too much space is given to differentiating between an archive and a local studies collection. In practice, many librarians manage a mix of both, and must have the flexibility to administer material which should strictly speaking come under the domain of archivists. There is scope even within a local collection to withdraw material, or not to accept it in the first place, and useful appendices are provided setting out various real-world collection development policies.

The authors' enthusiasm for local history promotion and collaboration is clear, and they note that much more could be done to promote local collections to target audiences such as high school students. They identify a need among local history librarians to have a forum where ideas can be exchanged – the obvious approach must surely be Web-based, and there are numerous examples of Wikis that can be adapted. Their

survey revealed a wide range of proprietary databases used to catalogue local collections, regrettably often not integrated into the general catalogue. Any newer alternatives to MARC 21 cataloguing are beyond the scope of the book.

It may be that Marquis and Waggener are addressing problems unique to the USA; certainly, best practice local studies work is as likely to occur in Canada, Australia or England, where the distinction between archives and local studies collections is crisper. They have been allowed to use an encouraging, breezy style, which may appeal to nervous newbies, but tougher editing could have halved the word-count without removing any of its essential advice.

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Technology Disaster Response and Recovery Planning
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Every library needs a technology disaster response plan. That ought to be obvious, yet there are very few that actually have a thoroughly developed and tested plan in place. Disasters can occur in different ways, from natural causes such as floods and fires, through to manmade disasters caused by error or even malicious action. In libraries, disasters will affect the collections, the buildings and the people, though here the focus is on the technology; fragile yet essential. This book in in two parts; the first has five chapters on the need for and the procedures for writing a technology disaster response plan, and the second part has two case studies. This is not precisely a guidebook to technology disaster response planning, but it is a very useful read for anyone who ought to be thinking about how a library can respond to a disaster.

The first chapter sets the scene. It defines the terms used throughout the book and gives the initial steps in technology disaster response and planning recovery. The second chapter covers a point easily missed by explaining how to conduct an inventory of digital resources and then assess the level of risk for each part of the digital collection. Assessing risk is a key part of disaster planning, for no library can afford to protect all its resources at the highest level; some decisions must be made that rate the importance of every resource and thus how much investment is justified in its protection. In the third chapter, the reader is introduced to dPlan, an