

2019

## Review of Leading and Managing Archives and Manuscript Programs

Maurice R. Blackson

Central Washington University, blacksonm@cwu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/westernarchives>



Part of the [Archival Science Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Blackson, Maurice R. (2019) "Review of Leading and Managing Archives and Manuscript Programs," *Journal of Western Archives*: Vol. 10 : Iss. 2 , Article 10.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26077/6681-50b5>

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/westernarchives/vol10/iss2/10>

This Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Western Archives by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@usu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@usu.edu).



## Review of *Leading and Managing Archives and Manuscript Programs*

By Peter Gottlieb and David W. Carmichael. Archival Fundamentals Series III, Volume 1. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2019. 204 pp. Softcover. \$49.00. ISBN: 978-1-945246-13-5

This book is one of seven in the Archival Fundamentals Series III. In the introduction, Peter J. Wosh explains how the Fundamentals Series III evolved. The book consists of two parts with six chapters each. The book has several authors. The first half is six chapters in length and those chapters are written by the editors, David W. Carmichael and Peter Gottlieb, and these chapters discuss different aspects of leadership.

The editors take turns writing the six chapters of the first part. The editors both have extensive experience working and leading archives. David Carmichael has had a career as a state archivist for Georgia and Pennsylvania. Peter Gottlieb retired as state archivist for Wisconsin prior to that he worked in the Wisconsin Historical society.

The introduction lists the themes the book addresses. They include: leaders are intentional, leaders are self-managing and self-aware, leadership is fundamentally about relationships rather than ideas, the engine of leadership is communication, leaders are agents of change, archival programs pursue broad missions, archival leaders have limited opportunities to provide staff with financial incentives, and archival leadership must make many noneconomic decisions. These themes are reiterated and explained in depth throughout the book.

Carmichael writes about the importance of communication in the first chapter. Sharing one's vision and values with staff and patrons is important. The attitude of the leader is key to successful leadership because attitude can be infectious. Open and continual communication is a theme that reoccurs in this text.

The second chapter is about strategic leadership. Gottlieb discusses strategic planning, resources and budgets. He also talks about the importance of building relationships within and outside the archives. He addresses the need to include resources and budgets in strategic planning while considering expanding resources. A good strategic plan is key to making these things happen. Developing new leaders is also discussed.

Chapter three is written by Carmichael and focuses on resources and budgets. Resources can include people, money, and facilities. The importance of having a good strategic plan to enable expansion of resources is a main takeaway from this chapter. Strategies for deploying, realigning and increasing resources are given. It has

recommendation about how to deploy existing resources, how to handle dwindling resources and how to increase resources.

Gottlieb writes about leading during transformative change and crisis in the fourth chapter. The complexities of transformative change and the challenges and the urgency of leading during crisis are addressed. Again, emphasis on communications and utilizing established relationships is key to leading during change and crisis alike. Scenarios of archives facing transformative change are given as examples.

Chapter five is titled building relationships within and beyond the archives. This chapter discusses relationships within the archives and beyond to the parent institution. This chapter also discusses the importance of forming coalitions and collaborating both within the parent institution and beyond. Cultivating these relationships is an important part of a leader's work.

Developing leadership skills is the subject of chapter six. Carmichael lists specific traits a potential leader should develop in themselves. Professional expertise, communication, listening, and teamwork skills are things an individual can develop to help them be a better leader. This chapter also mentions the importance of resilience in leaders. Emerging leaders should build their capacities for leadership and existing leaders should cultivate the next generation of leaders. This chapter also discusses the importance of cultivating new leaders by mentoring and encouraging emerging leaders to learn new skills.

The first half of the book seemed to repeat some of the same concepts in multiple chapters. This is probably because some of these concepts are key to being a good leader. I thought the sixth chapter about developing new leaders was very useful.

The second half of the book has authors from various types of archives writing about how they lead and the unique challenges different archives face. This section has leaders from different archives talk about the unique challenges they face in their unique types of archives. The challenges of a corporate archive are often different than the challenges of an academic archive or a non-profit's archives. Here again self-awareness of one's own skills, resilience and influence are mentioned. These chapters give insight into different types of archives and the unique challenges they face. This section will be very helpful for beginning archivists or students to learn about how various archives differ and how to navigate the particular type of institution the archive serves.

The book discusses many of the issues archivists face including how to support the profession in the face of budget issues or institutional changes. At times the content seems repetitive, but the text is explaining the importance of the key elements of leadership and how those elements fit together for good leadership.

In chapter seven Sarah Koonz writes about leading the State Archives of North Carolina. She discusses her mentor and her rise to leadership. The need to be an ambassador for the archives to both the public and the government is one of her key

points. Archival leadership means promotion of the value of the archive far and wide. State archivists face challenges that require they be proactive in promoting their value to the public and the state government.

Jennifer Johnson writes about leading a corporate archive in chapter eight. Corporate archivists are very different from most because their patrons or customers are the corporation, not the public. Jennifer I. Johnson is the senior archivist for Cargill, Incorporated. This chapter is titled *Cultivating Success: The Business of Archives*. She points out that in a corporate archive the company is the patron or customer and the archive needs to work to build relationships.

In chapter nine Lynette Stoudt writes about her experiences leading an archive in an historical society. She discusses the challenges of working for a small non-profit with over two hundred years of history. Willingness to learn and grow and resiliency are keys to success in a small non-profit organization. Lynette Stoudt was director of the Georgia Historical Society Research Center from 2012 until 2018.

Samantha Norling writes about leading an archive as a loan arranger in an archive for a non-profit entity in chapter ten. She manages the archives of the Indianapolis Art Museum. She discusses the challenges of being the lone arranger and some of the unique collaborations she used to successfully promote her department within the larger institution. She emphasizes the importance of outreach within the organization to build relationships as she describes her work making the archives an integral part of the organization. Ms. Norling is currently the digital collections manager for the Indianapolis Museum of Art.

Leadership challenges in a college or university archives is the subject of chapter eleven. The author reiterates the importance of a clear vision and mission statement. She notes archives have a meaningful role to play in their institutions and are vital for documenting institutional history. Megan Sniffin-Marinoff wrote this chapter and she is currently the university archivist at Harvard University. The scenarios she shares show the importance of being proactive in facing social issues regarding the archives and history of the institution.

The last chapter discusses the Archives Leadership Institute. Rachel Vagts writes about her experiences in the program and how the program evolved over time to help mentor new leaders in the field. Archival leaders need to be strategic and mindful about their career and service. They also need to share widely what they do to promote the program. She also notes leaders are made not born. This means it is important for emerging leaders to seek mentors. Existing leaders need to reach out and cultivate new leaders by mentoring them as well. Ms. Vagts works as manager of Special Collections and Digital Archives of the Denver Public Library.

I thoroughly enjoyed the second half of the book because it gave insights into the differences among the types of archives. This would be very useful for people new to the field to help understand the ways archives differ from one another. The book does a great job explaining the many different things archivists must do to assure their

program is valued by their institution and their patrons. Leaders must take on roles and responsibilities beyond the daily archival work of processing and providing reference services. Successful leaders must be able to communicate their vision for the archives to their staff, the public, and the institution they serve. This book is very useful for archivists and archival staff for ideas to lead and promote their archives. It would also be useful for administrators to learn how their archives can best serve the institution.

The book does have an index to help refer readers to specific subjects discussed. It also has an annotated bibliography of the sources the authors used in their individual chapters.

M.R. Blackson  
*Senior Lecturer, Archives and  
Special Collections  
James E. Brooks Library  
Central Washington University  
Ellensburg, Washington*