

the learning outcomes you are looking for, which is not unreasonable given the complexity and breadth of the field of web metrics.

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**Jessica L Lacher-Feldman**, *Exhibits in Archives and Special Collections Libraries*, Society of American Archivists, Chicago, 2013. viii + 200 pp. ISBN 1 931666 64 4. USD\$55.95.

Having just enough experience in developing and putting together public displays of archival records to know that it is harder than it looks, I was most interested in Jessica Lacher-Feldman's *Exhibits in Archives and Special Collections Libraries*. With master degrees in history and library science, and a background in several special collections libraries in the United States, Lacher-Feldman has produced a comprehensive and readable manual that will be invaluable to those considering their first exhibition, while containing sufficient insight and originality to sustain the interest of those with experience in the area.

Lacher-Feldman makes a convincing argument for the value of exhibitions to archives and special collections libraries and their parent institutions. On the utilitarian end of the scale, a skilfully mounted exhibition can build audiences and repository usage, increase awareness of the significance of collections, dovetail with teaching and research programs and, importantly, assist in making the case for adequate funding. More broadly, the exhibition functions as a community service, providing opportunities for learning and general enjoyment. In fact, for Lacher-Feldman, exhibiting is a 'fundamental part of our professional mandate' (p. 8).

The author, however, is realistic enough to acknowledge that a less lofty motive for exhibiting is that 'we are asked (or told) we need to' (p. 9). While exhibit work is for some 'an absolute joy', for many others it is something 'that engenders dread, fear, uncertainty, and anxiety' (p. 1). With an upbeat and encouraging tone ('you *can* do this', p. 71), Lacher-Feldman provides us with a series of suggestions and skills to aid in the generation of ideas and assist in their realisation.

The core of Lacher-Feldman's book and perhaps her most useful contribution is what she calls the 'Exhibit Cycle', a holistic planning and practice model that encompasses the earliest stages of development through to dismantling and self-assessment. Chapter 2 is devoted to explaining the Exhibit Cycle with sections on crafting a core idea, research and selection, labels, design, layout testing, publicity and the actual construction of the exhibit. Even if not followed to the letter, this is a handy conceptual framework and, not least, serves to introduce the reader to the many details likely to be encountered in putting on a show. 'Administrivia' (p. 22) is expanded on in chapter 4, 'Tools for Effective Exhibit Planning', which includes an exhaustive checklist and ideas to aid staff collaboration, area workflows and other necessary administrative tasks.

In addition to the Exhibit Cycle, check lists and an ongoing ideas notebook or file, the other key tool suggested by Lacher-Feldman is the calendar. As a means of generating ideas for exhibitions, she suggests institutions tailor a calendar spanning three

years and populated with dates related to events or people of local, national and even international significance. ‘Hidden dates’ (p. 34) are mentioned and she emphasises that even the smallest detail or intersection can trigger a theme that might shine a light on the collection in a novel way. A ‘mini case study’ here relates to the author’s use of a ‘ma-shup’ technique, the intriguing idea of ‘juxtaposing collections in an exhibit with loose, tangential connections’ (p. 35). Case studies are provided throughout, including three major studies of exhibitions centred around Stonewall, slavery and Three Mile Island.

Further chapters expand on facets of the Exhibit Cycle. A chapter on policy and procedures strongly advocates embedding a section on exhibiting as a core activity in the overall mission of the institution, as well as looking at best practice around security, separation forms and item-use tracking. Chapter 6, ‘Labels, Design, and Layout’, enjoins the reader to ‘think like a designer and find a way to make your exhibits come alive’ (p. 76), and provides practical instruction on constructing professional-looking labels and experimenting with layout. Chapter 7 deals with standalone and complementary digital exhibitions, and the following chapters look at various community engagement strategies, including public programs. The final chapters suggest a number of tools for self-assessment, the final stage of Lacher-Feldman’s Exhibit Cycle.

*Exhibits in Archives and Special Collections Libraries* incorporates a substantial appendix with step-by-step instructions in making book supports and exhibit labels, and further ideas for case layout. Lacher-Feldman also includes a literature review by Fernanda Perrone and Flora Boros which underlines the relative paucity of publications focusing specifically on exhibiting in special collections and in particular archives. This being the case, Lacher-Feldman’s exhaustive manual undoubtedly fills a gap and will be welcomed by archivists working not only in educational institutions but also in government and private archives. Any criticisms I have of the work are small – the impact of the many photographs would have been greater had they been in colour, and the book is, perhaps inevitably, somewhat US-centric. Also, much is made of designing exhibitions around a message to be taken away by the audience, which seems, at times, an overly didactic approach.

Lacher-Feldman notes that in order to create a successful exhibition we are required to develop and deploy many of the same skills as historians, designers, writers and editors, and teachers. Rather than be intimidated, the author adopts ‘Proceed and Be Bold’ (p. 6) as her motto throughout and in this spirit provides the reader with a variety of practical skills while challenging us to consider new ways of viewing and presenting collections.

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**Janet Delve and David Anderson (eds)**, *Preserving Complex Digital Objects*, Facet Publishing, London, 2014. 224 pp. ISBN 978 1 856049 58 0. GBP£59.95.

In Neil Grindley’s introduction to *Preserving Complex Digital Objects*, he explains that it aims to set out what is currently understood about dealing with complex digital objects and offer a broad framework for starting to manage and address relevant issues.