

## ***Libraries and Archives: A Comparative Study***

**Tomas Lidman. *Libraries and Archives: A Comparative Study*. Oxford: Chandos Publishing, 2012. 123 pp. \$70.00. Paper. ISBN: 9781843346425. Online. ISBN: 9781780633121.**

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Tomas Lidman asks a simple question: To what extent do libraries and archives fulfill the same mission? Is this mission significant enough to create two separate institutional entities? *Libraries and Archives: A Comparative Study* provides a clear guide of examination and analysis for this discussion. Written as a part of the greater Chandos Informational Professional Series, this book provides an easy-to-read and informational discussion of solid scholarship and research.

The debate within the library information science world has centered on the role and shared history that libraries and archives document through the cataloged and stored materials of each. There are historic legal codifications that separate the purpose and framework of libraries and archives, yet the workflows and frameworks of these two informational institutions are different. Before the first millennium BCE all information repositories were in essence archival. The introduction of papyrus and vellum/parchment instituted an additional methodology of information gathering and dissemination, though the process evolved with both clay tablets and other mediums for transmission. The purpose and systematic approach to organizing becomes the overriding principle in the concept of archives (Ebla) as compared with libraries (Ashurbanipal in Nineveh; Alexandria).

Lidman's comparative study progresses through the history and organizational development of national libraries and archives from early modern times through the twentieth century CE. The differences between national archives and libraries progress independently in terms of acquisition protocols. Whereas archives input and receive material in independent units, libraries receive specific items through purchase, gift, and legal deposit. This pattern shifts the frameworks and workflows into different standards of collection and classification. The provenance principle of archives becomes the basis for cataloging and collecting material in contextual groups. Libraries follow a subject classification system, which categorizes and manages items into a spectrum of organization access and use. The difference in interface and protocol underlines the core institutional differences between libraries and archives.

Lidman is writing for a large group that includes, but extends beyond, the library information science professional. His context is to deliver both a scientifically sound presentation and to give clear "user friendly" material to those who make the decisions to fund and support archives and libraries. This driving concern to educate and provide insight moves the book to its concluding chapter of "What's in store?" concerning the future of maintaining separate institutions of archives and libraries. As memory-keeping institutions, both archives and libraries have a role in providing infrastructure to the understanding of foundational information. The missions of archives and libraries are both unique and significantly different, and Lidman argues for a cooperative but separate existence between these institutions.

I appreciated the historical presentation throughout this work. Key issues behind the current debates regarding the mission and purpose of libraries and archives are articulated through the research and presentation of the material. The value of this book as a basic resource is beyond question. It is also valuable in that it provides clarity with an eye toward illumination on the topic. I would consider this work as an invaluable tool in discussing mission and purpose with boards and administrators; it is essential reading for library information professionals.

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