



# Leading the Historical Enterprise: Strategic Creativity, Planning, and Advocacy for the Digital Age (American Association for State and Local History)

By Bruce W. Dearstyne

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*Leading the Historical Enterprise: Strategic Creativity, Planning, and Advocacy for the Digital Age* presents new ideas and strategies for leading and innovating in museums, historical societies, historic sites, and other state and local history programs. The book blends insights from the best practices of model historical programs and museums with themes from the best recent studies of leadership.

This is a practical book with concrete suggestions that can be applied in just about any program setting. It covers:

- Demographics, technology, resource constraints, and other forces that are affecting the work of historical programs and museums
- Developing mission and goals to keep programs responsive to changing needs, challenges, and opportunities
- Effective strategies for leading and innovating to keep programs vibrant
- Engaging users and audiences for our programs in new ways
- Putting information technology to work and engaging users in new ways
- Day-to-day leadership of historical programs and museums

The book will be of interest to trustees, directors and staff of museums, historic sites, historical societies, and other state and local history programs; policy makers, e.g, legislative staff with responsibility for policy or budgets of cultural programs; professors and students of public history; libraries; and other people interested in state and local history and in innovation in cultural programs.

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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

*Leading the Historical Enterprise* is a thoughtful dissection of where history and heritage-based organizations are now and why, and it details the hard choices they must make in order to create for themselves a new, empowered place in today's society. The message here is all about proactive leadership, no-holds-barred decision-making, and disciplined follow-through. It's about making a commitment to the future. And best of all, Dearstyne not only provides a clear and compelling picture of the desired destination, he offers a road map to get there. (*AASLH History News*)

Professor Dearstyne's book, like all great books, leaves us with much to ponder and much to discuss. I heartedly recommend it to anyone working directly or indirectly within the historical enterprise and to all others who love their shared history. And I ask that those who read it carefully apply the insightful suggestions Dearstyne outlines within their own organizations to help ensure that our history has a future. (*AASLH Small Museums*)

*Leading the Historical Enterprise* is a valuable resource for its intended audience - individuals charged with leading historical organizations. It provides them with practical tips on how to successfully navigate the challenges they confront and offers compelling real-life examples of historical organizations that have effectively re-invented themselves in the quest to remain relevant. Everyone involved with the historical enterprise should read this book - especially those tasked with leading historical organizations. (*Archival Issues*)

Though it is true that much of this content is not new in terms of management literature, what is new is the synthesis of management literature for a new audience, the archival professional. This is the book's real achievement. It enables archivists to get a short (the book is only about 180 pages long) succinct introduction to the subject of management and leadership for historical enterprises, and in a world of rapid and turbulent change, with a multiplicity of challenges, this can only be a good thing. Its focused structure makes the book easy to dip in and out of to check back on references and checklists. There is an honest awareness of the testing financial environment in which many archivists operate, as well as also strategies and tips on how to manage this positively. And this is at heart a hugely positive book, an uplifting book brimming with genuine commitment to the cause of history for all. (*Archives and Records: The Journal of the Archives and Records Association*)

*Leading the Historical Enterprise* will be popular in university classrooms, where it will introduce future leaders to the variety of resources already in existence at local, state, and national levels. (*The Public Historian*)

*Leading the Historical Enterprise* is a thoughtful dissection of where history and heritage-based organizations are now and why, and it details the hard choices they must make in order to create for themselves a new, empowered place in today's society. The message here is all about proactive leadership, no-holds-barred decision-making, and disciplined follow-through. It's about making a commitment to the future. And best of all, Dearstyne not only provides a clear and compelling picture of the desired destination, he offers a roadmap to get there. (Anne W. Ackerson, former director of the Museum Association of New York, co-author of the book and blog *Leadership Matters*, and author of the *Leading by Design* blog)

History is essential and, as Bruce Dearstyne writes, our work "is of immense consequence." In a concise, readable volume, Dearstyne shares strategies for optimistic and aspirational leadership and innovation for history organizations in the 21st-century. (Bob Beatty, interim president and CEO, American Association for State and Local History)

Read this book! Bruce Dearstyne trusts the value of our local history. Dearstyne regards history as the way to make sense of the human condition in and over time. History, he urges, provides important skills and significant consequences for individuals and community culture. His book, *Leading the Historical Enterprise* advocates for history and its role in contemporary life using examples from across the country and around the world. He stresses the vast potential of the electronic age. Dearstyne notes the changing face of those who look to history as a guide and opens a conversation about how and where we present history. He probes challenges facing us and notes the opportunities we might embrace. We need to pay attention and respond with vigor to Dearstyne's carefully crafted chapters that analyze problems of doing local history today, the changing audience and new modes of presenting the past in the twenty-first century. There is much to be learned from this book; much to ponder, and the author suggests important actions that should be taken. (Carol Kammen, author of *On Doing Local History*)

#### About the Author

**Bruce W. Dearstyne** holds a BA in history from Hartwick College and a PhD in History from Syracuse University. He has taught American and New York State history at SUNY Albany, SUNY Potsdam, and Russell Sage College.

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