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# Book Reviews

Elyssa M. Gould

***Fundamentals of Collection Development and Management.*** 3rd ed. By Peggy Johnson. Chicago: ALA, 2014. 472 p. \$75 softbound (ISBN: 978-0-8389-1191-4).

Peggy Johnson has updated her comprehensive text, *Fundamentals of Collection Development and Management*, for its 3rd edition. Fundamentals is intended as “a comprehensive introduction to the topic for students, a primer for experienced librarians with new collection development and management responsibilities, and a handy reference resource for practitioners as they go about their day-to day work” (ix). The breadth and depth of information Johnson provided is impressive in its coverage, and any reader in her intended audience will glean something relevant and informative from this text. Comprehensive, yet surprisingly easy to read, Johnson’s text is written in a straightforward, informative style and organized into clear chapters and subsections that enable a reader to dip in and out of the text.

The structure of this edition is familiar to readers of earlier versions. It starts with a brief overview of the history and development of collection building as a specialty in the profession, then moves through well-ordered chapters reflecting key elements in collections work, including staffing models, budgets, policies, developing and managing collections, marketing and outreach, collections analysis, cooperative collection building, and scholarly communication. The chapter on scholarly communication has been expanded from the previous edition to acknowledge this ever-shifting environment and the growing roles libraries and librarians serve therein. Each chapter is rounded out with a case study, references, and supplemental reading suggestions. The supplemental reading lists have been comprehensively updated for this new edition and contain no sources published prior to 2008.

In the first edition of her text, published in 2004, Johnson dedicated a chapter to e-resources. Now ten years later, e-resources are of course an integral part of any collection, and Johnson reflects this shift by integrating e-resources throughout her book. This approach certainly makes sense but in some instances results in a level of brevity that doesn’t align with the work’s comprehensive nature. In particular I found the light treatment of evaluative criteria surrounding e-resource purchasing to be concerning. The author does provide a list of additional criteria to consider in a selection decision such as provider business model or licensing and contractual terms, but I fear this is far too brief to be of value for a novice in this field. Expansion on what these

criteria may look like in real life and how to fully consider them in the selection decision process would be a significant enhancement.

As she discusses in the preface to this new edition, collection management is “being reshaped by technology and the ubiquity of the Internet,” (ix) and the author states that her aim is to reflect this changing environment with updated and relevant examples, data, and reading lists. While the author certainly exhibits a clear knowledge of current trends and directions, I was disappointed that there was not more discussion of the potential impact of this reshaping. The author describes practices such as patron driven acquisition and macro-level selection, but there is no follow up on how these developments may lead to a questioning of the value of detailed collections work. Examples of libraries that have fully embraced these methods, and the impact they have or have not had on staff roles, would serve to better illustrate the landscape for new collections librarians.

A recurring criticism of the two previous editions was that Johnson focuses on large academic libraries with peripheral coverage of issues relating to collection building in public, special, and school libraries.<sup>1</sup> As a reviewer with a background solely in academic libraries, it is hard for me to fully judge whether these criticisms can be fairly levelled at this edition. The author has packed her book full with examples and references from the literature to provide the reader with avenues for further investigation and learning. These examples and references may inherently lead to a skew in coverage because the literature is heavily weighted in discussion of collection building in academic libraries. The case studies at the end of each chapter, however, cover a range of scenarios in different library environments, and the appendices, which list useful professional development resources, selection aids, and sample collection development policies, all seem to cover the broad spectrum of library types. These added resources indicate that the author is striving to make her text applicable to collections librarians across all library environments.

Overall, I would highly recommend this book to anyone in the author’s intended audience. The readers most likely to derive benefit are LIS students, as this book could well serve as an authoritative textbook. The case studies of real-world examples are an excellent resource for collections librarians. The author herself acknowledges that collection development and management “is both an art and a science. It results from a combination of knowledge, experience and

intuition,” (138) which means it cannot be learned without hands-on practice. But this text offers a comprehensive introduction to put any new collections librarian on the right path.—Annette Day (*annette.day@unlv.edu*), *University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

### Reference

1. Robert. P. Holley, *Review of Fundamentals of Collection Development and Management*, by Peggy Johnson, *Library Resources & Technical Services* 49, no. 1 (2005): 57–58; Susan K. Kendall, *Review of Fundamentals of Collection Development and Management*, 2nd ed., by Peggy Johnson, *Journal of the Medical Library Association* 97, no. 4 (2009): 319–20.

***Are Libraries Obsolete? An Argument for Relevance in the Digital Age.*** By Mark Y. Herring. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014. 258 p. \$25 softcover (ISBN: 978-0-7864-7356-4).

In 2001, a legislator told Mark Herring “everything was on the Internet, so why did our students need a new, big library building?” (7). Herring responded by publishing a brief and highly popular list, “10 Reasons Why the Internet is No Substitute for a Library.”<sup>1</sup> Six years later, Herring transformed that list into a book, *Fool’s Gold: Why the Internet is No Substitute for a Library* (McFarland 2007). Both the list and book outline in passionate detail Herring’s view that the Internet’s many flaws make it inferior to the library. “Not everything is on the Internet” writes Herring, and “quality control doesn’t exist. . . . The Internet is ubiquitous but books are portable.”<sup>2</sup> His latest book, *Are Libraries Obsolete? An Argument for Relevance in the Digital Age*, revisits points made in his earlier works. Thirteen years after Herring’s original list was published, has the Internet made the library obsolete? Herring says no.

*Are Libraries Obsolete* is divided into three parts. The first part returns to Herring’s 2001 list, updating each of his ten points. Part two outlines four areas that Herring believes have been made worse by the Internet: reading, literacy, privacy, and piracy. Part three describes the current state of the library and provides two possible scenarios for the future: one positive and one much more dismal.

Most of the book is devoted to part 1, which begins with the chapter “Everything Is Still Not on the Internet.” This sets the tone for the rest of the book. Everything is still the way it was in 2001, according to Herring. The Internet is still too large and complicated for the average user to navigate. There is still no quality control. Some information found on the web might be misleading or incorrect. The average user, making their way through this bramble without the help of a librarian, is likely to stumble upon misinformation or distractions. They might sacrifice their right to privacy. Their eyes will hurt from staring at a screen for too long. They might

find pornography. Herring paints the Internet as a dangerous place and tries to convince his readers that they would be much safer and more comfortable sticking to the familiar and trusted stacks of their libraries.

This is very much the same argument Herring made in his “10 Reasons” in 2001, a perspective that now appears dated. In part three, he describes what he sees as new challenges to the library. We are faced with staff who are unwilling to change and unable to keep up with technology. Our patrons are moving online, as are our collections, and our spaces and buildings are becoming “less about books and much more about social gathering places” (183). As for funding and politics, Herring writes that “libraries have for too long been the financial black holes at institutions, costing small and large fortunes, but not creating much in the form of a revenue stream” (182). Herring also sees a political climate that is turning against us. Disappointed with our lack of revenue, politicians are eliminating funding for public and academic libraries. For this, he blames librarians themselves. He urges us to “remain politically neutral” (208), so as not to anger our political leaders. “Ideas have consequences,” he writes, “and if we carve out a niche that is strongly opposed to ruling parties, we have only ourselves to blame when those parties are in power” (208).

Overall, the book lacks focus and is written with the defensive tone of someone who perhaps worries that he is becoming obsolete. Herring refers to his age so often, and speaks so disparagingly of those younger than he, it becomes a distraction to his main points. He writes, “those who are under thirty will laugh at this and say this is only a function of my age” (27). His statistics are seemingly lifted from thin air, without citation. “In fact,” he claims, “libraries account for almost 35 percent of all Internet access outside the home” (28). Throughout the book, he fixates on the amount of pornography available on the Internet. “The web,” according to Herring, “is rich and deep, but also vulgar and rude” (115). His tone is riddled with sexist microaggression. “YouTube videos of young men acting the fool, or worse, young girls imitating what they think might be appealing at some level to someone, crowd the Internet” (49). A bit later he writes, “A founding principle of Americanism is abundance, or so it would seem. If one is good, one hundred is better. We apply this to almost everything: cars, boats, guns, dollars, Starbucks, wine, women . . .” (67).

With public and academic libraries across the country losing funding and often closing their doors, it is important to argue for relevance in the digital age. Herring may not be the right person to fight this fight. It would be more useful to offer a book on the use of technology to improve library services rather than one about a man disappointed with the way the world has changed around him. Issues of concern to librarians, such as net neutrality and its impact on the library, would have been a good addition to this book, but