

Book Reviews

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Library Collection Assessment through Statistical Sampling.

By Brian J. Baird. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow, 2004. 103p. \$29.95 soft-bound (ISBN 0-8108-5038-9).

Based on the title of this book, *Library Collection Assessment through Statistical Sampling*, one might expect it to give more detailed coverage of collection development issues and a more robust discussion on statistical sampling than is presented. Nevertheless, this book does provide an overview of the basic concepts behind survey-based assessment, focusing on preservation issues and the evaluation of print collections' physical conditions. Baird explains the purpose of assessment projects and describes why assessment tools should be customized for one's particular institution and purpose. He describes collection assessment as a set of methods to evaluate the effectiveness and consequences of past decisions to inform future decisions, and he provides several examples illustrating this point throughout the book.

Chapter two, "Designing the Survey Instrument," and chapter three, "Conducting the Survey," focus on how to design a survey as an tool for assessment. An extensive series of questions developed to elicit information addressing preservation of print materials covers everything from paper fold tests to circulation data. Baird provides useful tips throughout these chapters and emphasizes the importance of maintaining consistency in how data are collected and scored. For example, Baird stresses that survey methodology needs to be well-documented so that follow-up surveys maintain the guidelines used previously. The author provides a limited list of resources for more examples of

survey instruments at the end of these chapters as well as within the bibliography at the end of the book; Ross Harvey provides many more examples in *Preservation in Libraries* (Bowker Saur, 1993).

One drawback of this book is the lack of clear definitions for some terms specific to book conservation and preservation. While an index is provided, detailed illustrations supplemented by a glossary of terms would enhance the reader's understanding of some of the methods described. Brian J. Baird, for example, provides a glossary as well as illustrations in his *Preservation Strategies for Small Academic and Public Libraries* (Scarecrow, 2003).

While a section of chapter three describes appropriate ways to conduct surveys for assessing the condition of print materials, only a brief mention is made of how to determine the appropriate sample size for a statistical evaluation. Baird highlights the importance of maintaining consistency in sampling methodology, but he does not adequately describe how to conduct valid random sampling. As a result, the theme of statistical sampling is not fully developed, and other sources will have to be consulted for a more pointed summary on statistical sampling methods. Baird does offer some recommendations for further reading within the notes section at the end of chapter three, but this subject might have been more fully developed within this work. *Managing and Analyzing Your Collection* (ALA, 2002), by Carol A. Doll and Pamela Petrick Barrin, provides a more thorough overview of different sampling techniques and step-by-step instructions on some basic statistical calculations.

In chapter four, "Analyzing the Data," the author goes into some

detail on how to set up a survey form in a database program, using Microsoft Access as the example. The screen shots presented to illustrate the process of setting up tables and forms do not render well in the text, and more detail would be required for a reader inexperienced with using database software to design a survey instrument—this book does not go into any real depth with regard to setting up survey forms in database programming software.

Baird presents a dismissive overview of techniques used to analyze the data collected during a survey. While some basic information is presented, he stipulates that a statistical expert is needed to ensure that the data are properly analyzed and interpreted. He describes the kind of information that is collected as "nominal data," and briefly mentions the kinds of analyses that can be accomplished with nominal data. The use of the chi-square test is briefly mentioned for use in comparing data collected from different libraries or from different venues within a library, but readers are again advised to seek the advice of statistics experts instead of conducting the analysis themselves. Although the chapter lacks significant content on data analysis, Baird does include several examples of how to interpret data; he also describes some of the pitfalls one may encounter during interpretation.

Much of the latter part of the book focuses on issues relevant to preservation of print-based collections. Studying the means by which the text blocks—such as the bound pages of a book—are held together and monitoring the condition of book bindings are some of the examples presented that are used to show how collection condition assessment can be harnessed

to help develop or expand a preservation or book conservation program. An interesting collection development example that is discussed in the book is an assessment of the conditions of books residing in the stacks compared to the condition of books being returned to circulation. Results of these surveys guided decisions about where, when, and how much attention should be applied to book repair, bookbinding, how to develop book conservation programs, and how effective past preservation efforts have been.

Library Collection Assessment through Statistical Sampling will be of limited interest to most libraries that already have a mature preservation or conservation program. Readers interested in preservation will receive only a basic overview of issues that one would encounter in survey-based assessment projects. In Baird's earlier book, *Preservation Strategies for Small Academic and Public Libraries*, many of the topics covered in the current book are discussed in a single chapter. In fact, sections of the 2003 book are repeated word-for-word in the current book (for example, compare page 65 in this book with page 16 in the 2003 book). Baird simply could have cited his previous work instead and put more effort into developing a more thorough overview of statistical sampling techniques and data analysis tools.

While all of the examples in the book are specific to preservation and loosely address collection development or collection management, some of the same principles could be applied to other assessment needs. Other books or resources, however, will need to be consulted if one is looking for an explanation of statistical methods to guide assessment projects. An anticipated follow-up to this book would be a discussion on collection assessment for electronic resources, including online books and journals. —Hilary Davis (hilary_davis@ncsu.edu), North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh

Disaster Response and Planning for Libraries. By Miriam B. Kahn. Chicago: ALA, 2003. 152p. \$40 soft-bound, ALA members \$36 (ISBN 0-8389-0837-3).

Disaster Management for Libraries and Archives. Ed. Graham Matthews and John Feather. Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2003. 236p. \$79.95 hard-bound (ISBN 0-7546-0917-0).

Disasters are by their nature unpredictable. This makes the content of these two works even more important for librarians today in a time of extremes (of weather and manmade problems) and tight budgets. A disaster plan is, as the cliché states, like a parachute. We hope never to have to use one, but it is better to have one and not need it than to need one and not have it. This pair of books offers many valuable insights into the disaster planning and recovery processes.

Both of these works emphasize the importance of having a disaster plan in place. During a crisis is no time to be making decisions that could affect one's institution for years to come. It is much easier to establish recovery criteria for collections and to delegate responsibilities before anything happens that would require their use. A well-trained and informed staff is able to react more quickly and efficiently to any situation as it arises. An effective disaster plan will also facilitate dealing with vendors, insurers, and helpful colleagues at other institutions.

Disaster Response and Planning for Libraries provides clear instructions for creating a disaster plan for an institution and responding to a disaster after it occurs. Many forms and checklists are included in the book for quick reference. The author breaks the process down into four steps: response, recovery, prevention, and planning. Response covers the period immediately after the disaster. This section contains much detailed information on the cleaning and repair of books and other library materials damaged by

water, fire, or other factors. Recovery concerns the long-term return of the library to its former level of service: replacement of lost or damaged materials, renovation and reconstruction of facilities, and so on. Included in an appendix is a thorough list of businesses and organizations that can be of help in a crisis. Prevention deals with the issue—all too easy for busy library managers to forget—of maintaining a safe and healthful workplace. Some of the suggestions included are obvious (like potential fire hazards), others less so (like damage incurred during a renovation project). If your library does not have a disaster plan, or if you would like to be sure it is as thorough as it ought to be, *Disaster Response and Planning for Libraries* is the book for you.

Disaster Management for Libraries and Archives is an effective complement to the previous work. International in scope, it contains chapters dealing with the physical and emotional effects of disasters as well as case studies written by veterans of these events. These sections provide some of the most compelling portions of the book. Fires in England and Sweden, war in the Balkans, wildfires in Australia—all of these and more are discussed.

As in the other book, planning is emphasized here. This is especially important in joint-use facilities. Examples given include libraries in government buildings in Australia and a public library-city archives in England. Another chapter deals with cooperative ventures among libraries in the United States. As with the disaster plan itself, the time to build links with other institutions in your area is before disaster strikes your library or theirs. The authors provide general guidelines applicable to all libraries, as well as specific items gleaned from hard experience.

During a crisis such as a fire it is natural to focus on recovering a library's materials. Maj Klasson, in the