

Book Reviews

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Making a Collection Count: A Holistic Approach to Library Collection Management. By Holly Hibner and Mary Kelly. Oxford: Chandos, 2010. 172 p. \$75.00 paper (ISBN 978-1-9433-4606-7).

This book is part of a new series by Chandos “designed to provide easy-to-read and (most importantly) practical coverage of topics that are of interest to librarians” (series t.p.). Collection management is certainly a topic of interest, and Hibner and Kelly succeed in providing an easy-to-read volume with a practical bent. Their tone is straightforward and occasionally even chatty. The focus is on collection management, not to be confused with the narrower topic of collection development. Both authors work at public libraries, and *Making a Collection Count*, while not explicitly aimed at public libraries, seems most appropriate as an introduction to the subject of collection management from that perspective.

Hibner and Kelly divide their work into eight chapters: “Life Cycle of a Collection,” “Understanding Your Workflow,” “Collection Audit and Using Statistics,” “Physical Inventory,” “Creating Collection Objectives and Benchmarks,” “Collection Organization,” “Making the Most of a Library Collection Budget,” and “Everything is Connected.” Most chapters include a brief, current bibliography. The authors also include two appendixes: a sample public library collection management policy and strategic content negotiation for the small library.

The first chapter, on the life cycle of a collection, aptly introduces collection management. Hibner and Kelly emphasize that the collection-management policy is the basis for all work

connected with the collection, and they stress the need for staff collaboration during all phases of the collection life cycle. The authors enumerate the stages of a collection’s life cycle this way: selection, acquisition, processing, shelving, checkout, use, check-in, re-shelving, repair and maintenance, and weeding.

In their next chapter, Hibner and Kelly suggest that workflow analysis is a fundamental way to improve the quality of collection management by understanding the particulars of the associated processes. They examine the details of each of their collection life cycles and provide examples for performing the workflow analysis. However, considering how time and labor intensive workflow analysis can be, the authors did not make a clear case that the benefit is worth the cost for all situations or libraries.

Hibner and Kelly’s use of the term “collection quality” was initially confusing. They are largely concerned about the quality of information about the collection (Does the book label match the catalog record? Is the book where the catalog says it is? Is the catalog status correct?) rather than the quality of the content (Is it up to date? Is it reliable?). Both kinds of quality are important and their intended meaning became clear, but the semantics were challenging at first. However, in chapters 3 and 4, Hibner and Kelly provide good suggestions for how a collection audit and physical inventory can help not only to assess the quality of information being provided about the collection to staff and patrons, but also to identify problems, both isolated and systemic.

In their chapter on collection objectives and benchmarks, the authors provide examples for establishing these

performance criteria and suggestions for evaluation of them. In this age of assessment, having as many strategies available as possible is important, and new ideas and perspectives are welcome. Hibner and Kelly next provide a concise introduction to the issues of physical space and the collection when they discuss collection organization. They point out some of the potential usage implications of subdividing collections, collection location, the choice of classification systems, special displays, and signage.

The authors contend, “It is well worth the time and effort to enhance a library collection to go through the public’s generous donations in pursuit of useful items!” (119). There may indeed be gems in library donations, and it may be important to accept gifts from a public-relations standpoint, but Hibner and Kelly are not convincing in their argument that gifts are worth the time and effort required to sort, evaluate, and process them. The most useful suggestion in the budget chapter may be for library staff to remind users that library services and collections are not free.

In the final chapter, Hibner and Kelly go beyond collection management to discuss holistic library service, including the role of the collection. The most interesting aspect is the discussion of holistic budgeting, which may provide an attractive alternative for some libraries to explore.

Making a Collection Count provides a good introduction to the many aspects of collection management. The examples are drawn largely from public libraries, but the framework is applicable to most library collections.—Karen Greever (greeverk@kenyon.edu), Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio