

# Book Reviews

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***Mentoring in the Library: Building for the Future.*** By Marta K. Lee. Chicago: ALA, 2011. 136p. \$50 paperback (ISBN 978-0-8389-3593-4).

Marta K. Lee is, if not uniquely suited to writing a book on mentoring in libraries, at least ideally suited to do so. Over her distinguished career she has found herself on both sides of the mentor–mentee relationship many times, and as she makes clear in her book, she has gained much through each experience. She states in the preface that she has “found that the most important part of being a librarian is mentoring” (ix). This belief and her enthusiasm for mentoring pervade the entire book. Through this book she shares her experiences so that librarians might learn from them and become interested in serving others in this way.

Throughout the book, Lee discusses various types of mentoring experiences ranging from very formal relationships such as found when mentoring a new employee, to the everyday, informal mentoring relationships that occur during a reference interview or through activities such as the American Library Association’s annual resume review service. In nearly every case Lee is able to provide first person anecdotes from both sides of the relationship. The best features of the book are the case studies where Lee describes a particular mentoring relationship. These case studies provide a way for Lee to offer the reader advice on providing a quality mentoring experience and to convey the lessons that she learned as a result.

The book is organized into nine chapters, beginning with a chapter that introduces the reader to mentoring and continuing through chapters on various types of mentoring relationships,

such as those with interns, library school students, prospective librarians, new librarians, volunteers, and coworkers pursuing promotion. Lee concludes the book with chapters on mentoring other librarians through electronic communications, including a chapter that gathers other types of activities, such as the aforementioned resume review service. Several appendixes are included, which contain sample forms for use by potential mentors and descriptions of activities detailed in the case studies. The book ends with an extensive bibliography of works on mentoring in libraries and an index.

Lee spends considerable energy emphasizing that formal mentoring plans, especially for long term mentoring relationships, lead to far better results. She provides a checklist of items to be considered when setting up an internship with a library school student. She goes on in a case study to describe an instance in which she mentored a library school student and the steps she took to set up and organize a meaningful experience for the student. In the chapter on mentoring new hires or librarians new to a position, she shows through two case studies that it is not enough to have a detailed plan—the plan must be customized to allow for the particular needs of the situation. As Lee quotes Pree and Wright from their book, *Mentoring: Two Voices*, “Mentoring cannot be reduced to a formula.”<sup>1</sup> Lee also argues that the mentoring experience is greatly assisted by having strong institutional support. In one case her university paid to have a library school intern attend the American Library Association Annual Conference that was being held locally. This support, as well as administrative

support for the staff time needed to supervise an internship, is essential for the success of a long-term mentoring experience.

Nowhere is Lee clearer about the power and influence of a good mentor relationship than when she discusses her early work as a cataloger. Having realized quickly that she was more suited to reference services, Lee feels that an attentive mentor at this time might have steered her in that direction. This is not to say that she did not have good mentors at various points of her career. In fact she describes how an undergraduate geography professor encouraged her to go to library school.

The chapter on mentoring coworkers for promotion spends several pages describing the intricacies of the promotion and tenure system, and how academic librarians function therein. Lee describes two different experiences that she had in mentoring librarians for promotion. In the first case, the two librarians she mentored completed their work on time; one was promoted while the other withdrew her application as she was leaving the university. In the second experience, the librarian was dealing concurrently with other time-consuming duties and was unable to meet many of their agreed upon deadlines. Although this librarian also was promoted, the contrasting case studies show that the mentoring experience can vary greatly.

The final chapter shows the reader—who by now is surely interested in serving as a mentor—how to get started. In fact, Lee demonstrates that many of the things that librarians do in the average day include elements of mentoring. She describes how librarians mentor each other by providing assistance on electronic mailing lists, reviewing resumes, and

by commenting on article and presentation drafts. Through these and myriad other activities, mentoring occurs regularly in the library. As Lee states, "There is never a mentoring project too small" (98). With this in mind and this book in hand, librarians everywhere now know where to start.—*John E. Adkins (johnadkins@ucwv.edu), University of Charleston, Charleston, West Virginia.*

### Reference

1. Max De Pree and Walter C. Wright, *Mentoring: Two Voices* (Pasadena, Calif.: De Pree Leadership Center, 2003).

***Human Information Retrieval.*** By Julian Warner. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010. 189p. \$35 hardcover (ISBN 978-0-2620-1344-4).

The book starts with Julian Warner's declaration, "Information retrieval (IR) is of high contemporary significance, diffusing into ordinary discourse and everyday practice" (1). As a field, IR is concerned with the structured analysis, organization, storage, searching, and retrieval of information.<sup>1</sup> Emphasizing that we are faced with, and inevitably navigating in, an advanced, complex, differentially understood, and apparently chaotic arena fueled by information technologies, this nine-chapter volume provides a foundation on which to understand IR from a theoretical perspective. The author suggests that IR is constructed from labor, choice, and technology and is rooted in human experience. He aims to offer an inclusive understanding of IR systems through a labor-theoretic approach.

Reviewing existing evaluative traditions and indicating the possibility for synthesis within a labor-theoretic approach, the book assumes selection power as a quality of human consciousness. Selection power is produced by selection labor, a form of mental (informational) labor. According to Warner, selection labor

comprises two processes: description labor and search labor. The former, an interpretive labor, is exemplified by cataloging, classification, and database description, which transform objects into searchable descriptions. The latter occurs when information systems are searched.

The centerpiece of the book is its fourth chapter titled "A Labor Theoretic Approach," within which operating and realizing human selection power with respect to the real world is debated. Related issues, like retrieval from full text on the basis of semantic as well as syntactical foundations, are discussed, as are practical considerations for redesigning Internet search tools with a humanistic approach. The book's concluding chapter reviews semantics and syntax in relation to preexisting theories relevant to IR, labor-theory approach, and existing and emerging real-world practices. The book includes a postscript, bibliography, list of supplemental readings, and index. Also helpful is the diagram on page 13, which delineates the book's structure, illustrating the topics that relate to Warner's labor theoretic approach.

The goal of the book is to enrich, promote, and advance IR research in the fields of information science and computer science. Warner's concluding remarks suggest that every design in the field of IR should serve end users with simplicity, interoperability, and cost-effectiveness. It is hoped that such a humanistic approach can facilitate improving the interactive quality of IR systems.

Although this theoretical, scholarly, and inspiring work that balances practical and theoretical aspects of human IR is at times difficult to understand, its depth, value, and originality should not be neglected. It will be more interesting, erudite, instructive, and comprehensible for patient readers, be they students, professors, systems librarians, systems designers and optimizers, or researchers familiar

with the IR field. I would have appreciated more attention given to the role of human behavior as it pertains to IR, especially given the book's title. Nevertheless, *Human Information Retrieval* is a useful contribution to the IR literature.—*Alireza Isfandyari-Moghaddam (ali.isfandyari@gmail.com), Hamedan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Iran.*

### Reference

1. Gerard Salton, *Automatic Information Organization and Retrieval* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968).

***Patron-Driven Acquisitions: History and Best Practices.*** Edited by David A. Swords. Berlin; Boston, Mass.: De Gruyter Saur, 2011. 205p. \$105 (ISBN: 978-3-1102-5301-6; eISBN: 978-3-1102-5303-0). Current Topics in Library and Information Practice.

Many libraries, large and small, are experimenting with patron-driven acquisitions (PDA) of e-books. Although numerous journal articles have been published recently on this topic, this is the first book devoted to PDA that I have seen. Edited by David Swords, vice president of sales and marketing for Ebook Library (EBL), *Patron-Driven Acquisitions* does have a slant toward EBL's service model, but do not let this prevent you from reading it. Swords has assembled an impressive cast of contributors, including Rick Lugg, Bob Nardini, Michael Levine-Clark, Kari Paulson, Rex Steiner, Ron Berry, Tom Corbett, Sue Polanka, Emilie Delquie, Doug Way, Julie Garrison, and Dennis Dillon. Swords also contributes two chapters to the volume.

The chapters, though logically organized, at times read like a set of essays rather than a cohesive monograph; this is no doubt due to the plethora of contributors. The book has three main sections—"Background and Reasons," "PDA in the World," and "Modeling PDA"—and concludes