Book Reviews

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Blockchain. Ed. by Sandra Hirsch and Susan Alman. Chicago: ALA Neal-Schuman, 2020. 87 p. $24.99 softcover (ISBN 978-0-839-1743-5).

This small book is a concise guide to understanding something that may not be a profound part of libraries in the future. This book explains the basics of blockchain that library personnel will need to know in the event something like it replaces the current data structures of information management. As stated in the introduction, it is "not a guide or manual, but a conversation starter," and the grant-subsidized research by the co-editors spearheads the complimentary chapters in an orderly manner (xi). Blockchain, with its time-stamped transactions residing in "safe" locations, is a concept that seems the be here to stay.

With all authors being of librarian ilk, the light and dark sides of Blockchain are balanced fairly, and all chapters provide timely subtitles and memorable taglines. The chapter about legal considerations is perhaps the most sobering, as administrators and reference librarians alike will need to be extremely well-versed in this area. Other chapters may also force one to rethink the middle-man and middle-ware that are currently a mainstay of most library management systems, with the idea of "smart contracts" that can devour the feast of library standards and protocols that already exist. Another major issue raised is user privacy, which will require more detail than this conversation starter covers,

due to the dizzying concept of decentralized servers.

It would have been helpful to address the financial components of Blockchain in the library (i.e., acquisitions and library fines). There is also very little mention of interconnectivity data shared through different protocols (i.e., legacy software, consortia, interlibrary loan, etc.), and although BIBFRAME is mentioned, it is not able to delve into the intricacies of possible future mappings that would trickle into other fields. Often reading like a panel discussion without the questions and answers, there is much overlap—albeit consistent—but without any contradictions being challenged in depth. On the surface, this can appear like a high-end administrative primer full of buzzwords, but disappointingly does not provide an index or glossary.

This is a good book to which to refer when the occasion calls for it. If Blockchain becomes the norm for governments and medicine, the global disruption will undoubtedly force itself into the realm of education, libraries, and systems of all types. But in an era where "cans" refer to a possible future, this book is essential in providing insights into Blockchain's potential problems and benefits, so that librarians can continue to be on their toes.—*Daniel Lincoln Nolting (dnolting@chatham.edu), Chatham University*

Library Licensing: A Manual for Busy Librarians. By Corey Halaychik and Blake Reagan
Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2020. 170 pages. $65.00 softcover (ISBN: 9781440870767).

One of the many challenges librarians face is reviewing and negotiating licensing agreements. Halaychik and Reagan discuss these challenges in *Library Licensing: A Manual for Busy Librarians.* The scope of this book is much broader than the title seems to indicate, covering not only license-related topics regarding electronic resources in its six chapters, but also information on contract management software, Integrated Library Systems (ILS) and maintenance, and services agreements. For this reason, the book can feel unfocused at times. Chapter 1 briefly introduces basic information about contracts, while chapters 2 through 6 give a broad overview of the mechanics of a contract (including common clauses within contracts) and information concerning organizing, managing, and administering contracts, with examples of checklists and contracts in

chapter 5 and subsequent appendixes.

This book has two stated objectives for its readers: one, that they will be able to "strengthen your understanding of common contract clauses and issues" and two, "provide you with a starting point to create internal guidelines for your organizations—a 'contract manual', so to speak" (1). Both of these objectives are valuable and worthwhile for librarians trying to navigate contracts and licensing. While the book's organization may prove to be slightly challenging, in part due to its broad scope, both objectives are met within the book.

Chapters 4, 5, and appendix A are the most valuable portions of the text, especially to librarians who are new to licensing. These chapters give a descriptive analysis of the processes associated with administering and managing contracts, along with examples of language that can be used in