
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 to 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

contract negotiations. Appendix A offers a sample checklist of what should be included in the licensing agreements. The appendixes also include examples of master agreements and standard licensing agreements, though not all the examples given appear pertinent to library-related services. For example, it is hard to see how a license for “Appendix E: Sample Master Lease for Students” (151) relates to services offered by or for the library and for licensing librarians. The quality of advice among the different steps is also uneven at times.

A key problem to note is that the editor for *Libraries Unlimited* did not do their due diligence in editing the book. For example, in chapter 2, “Contract Language,” the focus of the chapter is “to provide information and recommendations for numerous types of contract clauses” (10). The first four pages after the chapter introduction, however, go into great detail about contract maintenance software and ILS, which is what the authors said they would not treat in great detail. That content is not unimportant, but it is difficult to see how it fits organizationally into a chapter on contract language. Another example is how the text abruptly moves from service and maintenance agreements in the first two chapters, to electronic resource contracts, in the third chapter, “Organizing Contracts,” the latter entailing a plethora of terms and conditions and contract clauses quite different from the previously discussed contracts. The interweaving of contractual language in chapter 3 is confusing to understand. It seems that the information could have been collated differently into chapters regarding service

and maintenance agreement clauses and another chapter on electronic resource license agreement clauses. Having both types of agreements discussed together creates confusion, especially for those new to the process, which is the intended audience of the book.

One of the book’s strengths is that the co-authors are from diverse backgrounds: Halaychik, a librarian who manages the licensing process at his library, has collaborated with a legal and procurement expert, Reagan. Both authors have dealt with contracts and licensing in their respective positions. Having a procurement officer’s perspective offers a unique perspective to the literature that librarians may not have considered. Another strength is the examples of wording one could use in the license negotiations with vendors in chapters 3 and 5. Despite this strength, the authors often refer to other books and resources because the scope of the book is so much larger than can be addressed in one volume. This makes it difficult for the reader to decide to continue to read this book or to refer to the other sources, a puzzling decision since this book is purportedly intended for busy librarians.

The intended audience for this book is those beginning or new to the licensing process or those struggling to understand common issues in contract language. It is also intended for those who are too busy to read standard licensing materials. Despite its organizational flaws, this book provides valuable content for its intended audience.
—Kristy White (*whitek9@duq.edu*), *Duquesne University*

Metadata for Transmedia Resources. By Ana Vukadin. Cambridge, MA: Elsevier, Chandos, 2019. 186 pages. \$78.95 softcover (ISBN 978-0-08-101293-2).

From the moment that author Ana Vukadin invokes the memory of small-town murder victim Laura Palmer on page one of *Metadata for Transmedia Resources*, the reader is transported into a world of intertextuality, transfictionality, and various fictional worlds that seem stranger and yet just as familiar as *Twin Peaks*. Using liberal amounts of examples from popular culture and literary canons—from J. K. Rowling’s *Wizarding World of Harry Potter* to the Wachowskis’ *Matrix*—Vukadin goes down the veritable rabbit hole of transmedia resources, explains why transmedia resources matter increasingly to libraries, and outlines best practices in describing and organizing the metadata for transmedia resources. Resplendent with modeling examples and illustrations from fictional worlds, the subtle differences in and complexity of transmedia resources becomes clear.

Vukadin writes, “Transmedia is relatively easily identified, but not so easily defined” (21). Transmedia resources use various communication platforms such as graphic novels, board games, television, film, and literary works,

to deliver parts of a single conceptual whole in innumerable ways. Skipping from historical examples predating the digital realm (e.g., Richard Wagner) to the most recent alternate, augmented, and/or virtual realities, transmedia combines delivery forms with various types of bibliographic relationships, making complex networks and graphs of metadata. Although the scope, structure, and content in fictional worlds might vary across delivery method, focusing on transmedia resources and storytelling commonly encountered in library collections allows for an intimate portrait. Chapter 2 describes the compositional structure (intercompositional versus intracompositional) of transmedia, defines transfictionality, and what transmedia is not. So often, we inhabit these fictional worlds as readers and media consumers without fully appreciating their underpinnings. Vukadin discusses the topos (specific time and place), mythos (lore of a fictional world), and ethos (set of ideas, beliefs and behaviors) that surround the developing narrative.