
Book Reviews

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Sudden Position Guide to Acquisitions. Deborah Hathaway, Paul Kelsey, Stacey Marien, and Susan E. Thomas. Chicago: ALCTS Publishing, 2020. 86 p. \$30.50 softcover (ISBN 978-0-8389-4849-1); \$15.00 e-book (ISBN 978-0-8389-4850-7)

The third in the ALCTS Sudden Position Series tackles acquisitions and promises an easy-to-read introduction to the responsibilities covering “essential knowledge, tools of the trade, and best practices” (ix). At a slim eighty-six pages, someone “suddenly” in acquisitions, or those preparing to interview or start a new position, will still find a lot of ground covered.

For time pressed readers, chapter 1, “What You Absolutely Need to Know,” covers brief overviews of ordering and types of orders, licensing language, accounting and budgeting practices, and collaboration with other departments. The librarian new to acquisitions may not be familiar with the various purchasing models that they will soon use and it may benefit these readers to have access to a glossary that included the common terms, especially while reading this first chapter. Notably, on page 3, the authors mention “approval plans” but do not define what this model encompasses until pages 44–48 in the next chapter. The section on “Common Ledger Vocabulary” has duplication of terms and it could also be confusing to those new to this language.

Management of staff may not be the first concern of someone new to an acquisitions position, but the authors’ inclusion of this topic in the first chapter is practical. Though there is only so much that can be discussed in an overview, this section provides some starting points for anyone new to managing others. Getting to know staff through meetings, scheduling training, and simply being approachable are some beginning steps suggested, especially before trying to introduce new ideas and workflows.

In chapter 2, standard procedures and best practices are outlined. This chapter is dense with information and one the new-to-acquisitions librarian will probably return to as they encounter these situations and workflows on the job. The authors give an ample explanation of the basics of purchasing and subscription models, and briefly describe the patron-driven models of Demand-Driven Acquisitions (DDA) and Evidence-Based Acquisitions (EBA). However,

the authors miss an opportunity to also introduce how the increasingly popular streaming video and other media fit into these models and do not do so until later in chapter 3.

Especially worth noting from the third chapter, “Things You May Encounter,” is the coverage on developing a spending forecast and dealing with budget reductions and cancellations. The authors explain how forecasting is essential to planning for new resources and expected increases for current holdings. They also provide advice on where to start when experiencing decreased funding while trying to maintain quality of service. Working with reports of various types related to orders and library collections are covered, as the acquisitions librarian will at least need to consult, if not be the one to create, most of them.

The widely-used software Microsoft Excel is deservedly (though briefly) mentioned, along with other “tools of the trade” in chapter 4. This chapter includes a useful list of vendors and publishers. The library’s Integrated Library System (ILS) will likely be a heavily used tool for many in acquisitions and navigating the ILS’ acquisitions module is a skill the new librarian will learn primarily on the job. Since there are many ILSs, this text does not discuss the specifics of any one system, besides the inclusion of two screenshots in the first chapter of the ledger structure displays in Ex Libris’ Voyager and a SirsiDynix ILS. The authors intentionally use multiple chapters to provide general overviews of how the librarian may be using their ILS, including creating purchase orders, receiving materials, paying invoices, and extracting reports.

The authors use the final chapter to suggest books, articles and journals, courses, listservs, and professional groups for continuing education and professional development. This is a good reminder for the new and possibly overwhelmed librarian that there are resources and professional activities available to increase experience in and understanding of acquisitions.

The “Sudden Position Guide to Acquisitions” is a

successful addition to the series that covers areas of library technical services. While some sections may have benefited from more clarity and a different arrangement of the information, those new to acquisitions, or even library staff interested in understanding some of the functions of this work,

will be able to quickly extract the background knowledge needed for initial success. This book could also be a title the new librarian consults as they develop the skill sets and workflows for their role in acquisitions.—*Audra M. Deemer* (*adeemer@depaul.edu*), *DePaul University, Chicago*

Sudden Selector's Guide to Geography and GIS. By Carl Olson and Kim M. Ricker. Chicago: ALA, 2020. 93p. \$30.50 softcover (ISBN: 978-0-8389-4771-5).

As stated in the foreword, “The ongoing purpose of the sudden selector’s series is to provide current information on selection in specific subject areas in order to assist selectors in creating a manageable process in unfamiliar subject territories” (vii). This new entry in the series does just that; it provides new geography and geographic information systems (GIS) selectors with a baseline knowledge of the field. It accomplishes this by introducing the subject and a broad review of valuable tools and resources.

This book can be viewed as a blueprint for a new selector’s beginner “toolbox” with three shelves of tools. The top shelf contains tools for general collection development. The middle shelf holds tools in the form of information on the subject and field of discipline. The bottom shelf includes tools for selecting materials, including advice on what software and hardware a library would need to support this discipline.

Basic collection development tools are in the top layer. Although the authors state that their goal is not to teach collection development, many resources are shared on the subject. The reader will find recommendations for books on general collection development, including six different titles and accompanying summaries. Additionally, five different review sources and their specialties are discussed, including *Choice* and *Booklist*. This layer is rounded out with descriptions and links to three electronic discussion lists and websites. This is the thinnest layer in the toolbox, but a helpful one for any new selector.

The middle layer of the toolbox contains material explaining the subject: from the basic question, “What is geography?” to the more complex question, “How do I build expertise?” The author likens geography to astronomy to explain the concepts, but this analogy falls flat. Later in the text, the authors provide a more illustrative description, stating, “geography finds its ancestry in legendary voyages and travelers’ tales” (2). This leads into a review of the field with “Three Core Concepts, Two Branches, and Four Traditions” (4). The “methods and workflow of geography” are grouped into “books, boots, and benches” (7), showing how

the field emphasizes learning the literature, conducting field work, and doing lab work to analyze findings. Next, the author provides examples of recent research that serve as great starting points for discussions with patrons and touchstone examples for future reference. The authors discuss examples of what GIS can do, including how “it allows us . . . to find, understand, interpret, and perhaps even question relationships and patterns that are shown based on geographic location” (21). Later in the book, readers learn how to build expertise in the field through published literature and are given further information for formal and online study. Finally, the importance of networking to stay current and to obtain assistance when needed is emphasized, accompanied by a helpful list of conferences and societies.

The bottom layer of the toolbox helps new selectors determine what is needed to support the discipline, including hardware and software, plus explanations of different types of data. The selection advice is split across several chapters, with recommendations for selecting reference materials, such as maps, journals, databases, and software. Multiple examples of each type and explanatory notes are provided. For example, the section on maps discusses cartography and usages for different types of maps. Major publishers and call numbers are listed. The section on software and vendors is invaluable. It describes the audience, price, functionality, user interface, and hardware compatibility of each title, followed by information on open-source content and how to acquire the data at the core of GIS. These chapters provide useful advice regarding how to use LibGuides and collection development policies effectively.

The material in this book is dense and wide-ranging, making it a handy reference book for selectors, and a great introduction to the subject and field. This reviewer strongly recommends this book as a starting point for selectors new to geography or GIS. Geography is a complex field, but this book gives selectors a quick foundation to jump into their new role and provides a clear structure for continued learning.—*Tamara Bozich* (*tbozich@ucsd.edu*), *University of California, San Diego*