

in science, and history of scientific theories on gender. This resource weaves all of these strands into an enlightening picture of the effect of gender in the field of science. Highly recommended.—*Lisa Roberts, Catalog Librarian, California State University, Sacramento.*

## Professional Materials

Karen Antell

Editor

*Answering Consumer Health Questions: The Medical Library Association Guide for Reference Librarians.* By Michele Spatz. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2008. 142p. \$65 (ISBN 1-55570-632-0).

Answering consumer health questions is a more complex process than medical librarians may immediately recognize. In this book, Michele Spatz clearly demonstrates the numerous facets of this task. In attempting to address this process, Spatz calls to mind the varied aspects integral to understanding and working with consumer-oriented health questions.

Comprising seven chapters, this book shifts its focus logically between the information provider and information receiver. It invites the reader to view the consumer health information transaction through a varied lens. This can be seen clearly in the author's preface: "In addition to possessing the skills needed to provide the appropriate informational resource, librarians must have an understanding of the psychology of health and medical consumers" (ix).

The book's chapters are laid out in an intuitive way. The author covers all of the important considerations that are unique to medical questions, including ethical and legal implications. Taking it one step further, Spatz draws on broad resources in her discussion of the psychological factors that affect the relationship between patron and librarian when obtaining and disseminating consumer health information. Understanding the diverse needs and backgrounds of health information consumers is examined, along with useful resources to help guide practice.

*Answering Consumer Health Questions* boasts several features that make it a wonderful reference resource. Dispersed throughout the book are vignettes that provide context and frame the reality and complexity of everyday reference scenarios. Another practical feature is the book's "exhibits." These sections provide links to useful resources that every medical library needs to be aware of to be an effective information provider.

As a reference book, this work reaches a broad audience. Perfect for library school students, graduate assistants (especially in medical libraries), and professional librarians, the material and scope of this book allows it to be read in its entirety or sampled and referenced as needed.

The author's evident delight in helping diverse patrons with personal and often complex needs demonstrates the

consistent struggle and reward of being a medical librarian. This book is a must-have for any medical library.—*Mark Hopkins, Library Technology Manager, Bird Library, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Oklahoma City*

*Crash Course in Reference.* By Charlotte Ford. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2008. 143p. \$30 (ISBN: 978-1-59158-463-6).

One in a series of Crash Course titles from Libraries Unlimited, *Crash Course in Reference* fulfills the promise implied in its title. Ford has crafted a succinct, well-designed manual for all things reference in public library settings.

In natural progression, the book covers the definition and standards for reference service, general reference collection development, specific types of resources, ethical considerations, and service policies. In addition, the importance of networking with other librarians is discussed. A list of additional information resources for learning about reference work is provided. Each chapter includes a set of review questions that could serve as assignment questions for students in MLS or LSTA programs. This reviewer was able to test drive the book with a library practicum student and found it beneficial as a teaching and learning tool; in addition, the student found it helpful in shaping her practicum questions.

*Crash Course in Reference* outlines the reference interview process and stresses its importance in providing high-caliber service to library patrons. The book provides a response to the customary interview question for reference librarian positions: "If you only had seven resources you could have with you on a desert island, which would you take?" The response helps make new librarians aware of the wealth of information that can be found with a few well-selected tools. Ford also places well-deserved emphasis on the importance of excellent customer service in reference transactions and includes RUSA's *Behavioral Guidelines for Performance*. Her presentation of ethical dilemmas in reference work serves as a reminder that patron confidentiality and privacy are of utmost importance. Ford presents questions for consideration when working on inquiries that appear controversial, acknowledging that while textbook responses may provide the framework for answers to reference questions, it is not always easy to discern one right way to respond.

More contemporary and accessible than Bill Katz's *Introduction to Reference*, which has long been a standard text in library school curricula, *Crash Course in Reference* is an affordable, must-have resource for public libraries of all sizes and is of particular interest for training new staff.—*Lisa Powell Williams, Adult Services Coordinator, Moline (Ill.) Public Library*

*Gotcha Good! Nonfiction Books to Get Kids Excited About Reading.* By Kathleen A. Baxter and Marcia Agness Kochel. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2008. 259p. \$35 (ISBN 978-1-59158-654-8).

*Gotcha Good!* is written for the public or school librarian who wants to purchase or promote nonfiction titles for

## SOURCES

elementary and middle school students. Booktalks or book reviews are written for each selected title. Books listed are generally published between 2005 and 2007, with most having a 2006 copyright date. Most of the information about the books profiled comes in the form of a ready-made booktalk. The booktalks are delivered in a variety of formats, including “fun facts,” notes of interesting illustrations to show, and plenty of hooks to get the audience clamoring for nonfiction books. Occasionally, the authors slip into a review written for the librarian rather than the reader. Without distinction between the two, the casual user will need to be cautious when using *Gotcha Good!* for some quick booktalks. A large percentage of the books profiled have a black-and-white picture of the cover included. There are also eight interesting author profiles written in question-and-answer format. Five top-ten lists are scattered throughout the book with the intention of a quick list for bookmarks. However, a mixture of reading levels is included on each bookmark, making it difficult to use for any one audience. The range of topics covers most areas of nonfiction. The book is divided into seven chapters by broad subject, ranging from “American Journeys” to “Monsters, Mysteries, Mummies and Other Quirky Books,” then alphabetized by author within the chapters. Although this book has a title and author index, it is missing a subject index, which is problematic. Because of the missing subject index, it is difficult for this book to be used as a reference. It is time-consuming to find out whether a book on a particular subject is suggested. Thus, this title will primarily serve as a browsing title for a librarian looking for interesting books to buy or promote in the nonfiction area.—*Tiffany Wylie, Library Media Specialist, Truman Elementary School, Norman, Oklahoma*

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***The Medical Library Association Essential Guide to Becoming an Expert Searcher: Proven Techniques, Strategies, and Tips for Finding Health Information.*** By Terry Ann Jankowski. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2008. 150p. \$65 (ISBN 1555570-622-3).

In the preface to this new guide to online searching of biomedical databases, author Terry Ann Jankowski notes that, in the recent past, “newly hired librarians were ill-equipped either to run or teach others how to perform comprehensive literature searches on even the most commonly used bibliographic databases” (ix). An experienced teacher of searching skills and head of the Education and Information Services Department at the Health Sciences Library of the University of Washington, she has built upon her popular Medical Library Association continuing education course to create this monograph. The intended audience is library school students and librarians who have not had extensive training in database searching. Although many of the principles discussed may be applied to other bibliographic databases, the focus is on the biomedical sciences.

The book is organized around the database search process, starting with the patron interview and continuing through database selection, search construction, subject and

natural-language search principles, and evaluation and revision of search results. Along the way, the author provides several helpful checklists and worksheets for the reader, such as search request forms and a search strategy worksheet. One valuable chapter contains annotations of many key databases in the biomedical sciences, both open-access and proprietary. The author discusses several methods of revising a search depending on the client’s feedback and explains the concepts of precision and recall.

Some of the special features of this volume are a glossary of terms, exercises at the end of many of the chapters (with suggested answers), and resources for maintaining search skills. Each chapter includes references, and a list of additional resources for further study by chapter topic is provided at the end.

It is not difficult to find books that cover theoretical information on databases and the search process or books that teach nonlibrarians how to find health information on the Internet. But this book fills a different niche. It meets its author’s goal of being a practical manual for learning the process and skills for online searching of biomedical databases. It will be useful for library school students and for librarians coming from other fields to a hospital or the health sciences library.—*Betsy Tonn, Reference Librarian, Bird Library, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Oklahoma City*

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***The Medical Library Association Guide to Health Literacy.*** Ed. by Marge Kars, Lynda M. Baker, and Feleta L. Wilson. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2008. 314p. paper \$75 (ISBN: 978-1-55570-625-8).

*The Medical Library Association Guide to Health Literacy* is a compilation of chapters written by a different authors—practitioners as well as academicians. The authors’ task was to define literacy as it relates to, or forms the basis of, their work with patient information. “Literacy” can mean several different things, including the ability to read, the ability to comprehend written information, and the ability to do basic math, but the main focus of this book is on low literacy in reading, which is a major barrier to the dissemination of health information and which has a negative effect on the other features of literacy.

There are three stated purposes of this work: to help librarians “better understand the issues of health literacy,” “help others become health literate,” and “become change agents within their organizations.” People who are health literate, as defined by the American Medical Association and the authors, can recognize when they have a need for information, can read and understand the information they are given, and can determine the appropriateness of such information. This book focuses on the mechanics of low reading literacy, dealing with other areas to a much lesser extent.

The guide addresses its second and third goals in a way that is oriented toward practical solutions. This volume provides a few good ideas for working with various target populations, such as teenagers, senior citizens, and public library patrons, as well as patrons with questions regarding health