

SOURCES

a model for collaboration and library skills instruction.—Melanie Wachsmann, *Reference Librarian, Lonestar College, CyFair Branch, Cypress, Texas*

Managing Children's Services in the Public Library. Adele M. Fasick and Leslie E. Holt. 3rd ed. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2008. 248 p. \$45 (ISBN 978-1-59158-412-4).

This ambitious work offers an overview of the role of Manager of the Children's Department in a public library setting. In the authors' words, the book "explore[s] the ways librarians can manage their work, so that their collections and services give the maximum value to all the children of a community" (xvi).

The book's contents are as extensive as the job description is long, beginning with a section on planning services within the context of community, strategic planning, and evaluation. The second section concerns managing the children's department and covers a plethora of topics from human resources management to finances to safety concerns. Section 3 delves into the management of services within the department, such as collections, programming, outreach, and marketing. The last section focuses on professional development for children's librarians.

Fasick and Holt, whose lengthy experience is noteworthy, provide a list of references and suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter, as well as a full bibliography. Pictures, tables, and screen captures are used to illustrate several examples, but it is somewhat disappointing that they are reproduced only in black-and-white.

The information covered in this title is exhaustive, indeed some details offered border on the condescending—most library workers considering a managerial position will already know the basics and perhaps do not need them rehashed here. Unfortunately, the book is poorly edited. There are many redundancies, missing words, and typos that might distract readers. That being said, the authors have covered all the bases, and those who want a comprehensive guide will find this book useful.—Sarah J. Hart, *Information Services Librarian, Brampton Library, Brampton, Ontario, Canada*

The Quality Library: A Guide to Staff-Driven Improvement, Better Efficiency, and Happier Customers. Sarah Laughlin and Ray W. Wilson. Chicago: ALA, 2008. 144 p. \$55 (ISBN: 978-0-8389-0952-2).

The Quality Library is a comprehensive guide for library administrators who are serious about wanting to improve their libraries. The authors use real-life stories to support their use of the Deming approach to institutional improvement. W. Edwards Deming's distinctive principles involve thinking of the institution (i.e., the library) as a system comprised of processes, suppliers, and customers and understanding the purpose of that system. In six chapters, the authors discuss the "continuous improvement approach" and the steps toward achieving the desired results.

According to the authors, to ensure continuous improvement, library administrators should encourage active participation of the staff and empower them to be creative and take risks. Administrators should also attempt to cultivate long-lasting relationships with vendors and suppliers while reducing variation among the processes necessary to run the library system (circulation, communication with customers, policy adherence, etc.). Process standardization and reduction of variation are essential to overall library improvement. The reader is reminded that satisfying the customer is more important than pleasing the supervisor. Laughlin and Wilson have included a chart for every step of the process. These charts help the reader envision the library as a system, select the key processes to improve, put the tasks in order, determine measurement opportunities, and record measurements and data.

The Quality Library tackles practical questions such as "where do we find the time for process improvement?" It also provides specific instructions for creating the charts and managing ongoing documentation. The inclusion of real library stories reassures the reader that this method is tried and true. The appendixes and glossary help make the information easy to digest. By using realistic scenarios and tangible examples, the authors manage to create a sense of "can-do" for the library administrator and leave the reader feeling ready to start the process of improvement. The use of the Deming method as a means to improvement is fresh in a world of workflow mapping and streamlined techniques.—Candice Gwin Oliver, *Regional Branch Administrator, St. Louis County Library, St. Louis, Missouri*

Questioning Library Neutrality: Essays from Progressive Librarian. Ed. by Alison Lewis. Duluth, Minn.: Library Juice Press, 2008. 156 p. \$18 (ISBN 978-0-9778617-7-4).

According to the ALA Code of Ethics, as a profession, librarians ideally "distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources." Is it possible, or even desirable, to neutrally present all points of view on any issue or historical event? Are all points of view even available to us? Don't publishers, approval plans, and budgets at least partially dictate the materials we can offer our patrons?

In *Questioning Library Neutrality: Essays from Progressive Librarian*, Alison Lewis collects a chronologically arranged series of essays originally published in *Progressive Librarian*, the journal of the Progressive Librarians Guild, intended to illuminate the issues surrounding the "founding myth" of neutrality in librarianship. A few of the topics covered include the history, present, and future of activist librarianship; the myth of the neutral professional; and the lack of information criticism in library education and scholarship. While the essays vary in quality, taken as a whole this book very thoroughly and critically fills a gap in library literature by positing that

library neutrality is not only impossible, but even dangerous, as it implicitly supports the status quo.

While other works, such as *Revolting Librarians Redux: Radical Librarians Speak Out*, edited by K. R. Roberto and Jessamyn West (McFarland & Co, 2003), provide critical looks at the political and social construction of libraries and librarianship, *Questioning Library Neutrality* is unique in its focus on the dangers of professional neutrality at a time when intellectual freedom is endangered by the government and by social, racial, and economic inequalities that dominate our national dialogue. This work challenges all librarians to interrogate their own beliefs and practices and begin to negotiate a critical relationship with some of the concepts they take for granted. It is highly recommended for professional development collections in all libraries and especially for academic libraries supporting Library and Information Science programs.—Sarah VanGundy, *Reference and Instruction Librarian, SUNY Purchase College, Purchase, New York*

Research-Based Readers' Advisory. Ed. by Jessica E. Moyer. Chicago: ALA, 2008. 278 p. \$50 (ISBN 0-8389-0959-1).

Meant for and written by both practitioners and researchers in the field of readers' advisory, the latest title in the ALA Readers' Advisory Series offers essays by practicing librarians, each accompanied by an annotated literature review compiled by Moyer. She offers this work as an opportunity for librarians doing readers' advisory work to share techniques and tools within the framework of research and study.

Mentioning a "better blending of theory and practice," Barry Trott and Joyce Saricks urge us to become "reflective practitioners." Their chapter provides a thorough past, present, and future discussion covering all aspects of readers' advisory service and includes an apt quotation from librarian Samuel Swet Green in 1876: "The more freely a librarian mingles with readers, and the greater the amount of assistance he renders them, the more intense does the conviction of citizens, also, become, that the library is a useful institution, and the more willing do they grow to grant money in larger and larger sums to be used in buying books and employing additional assistants." (*Library Journal*). *Plus ça change!*

Writings and collections by Chelton, Ross, Shearer, Saricks, Smith, and Wyatt dominate the readers' advisory canon that Moyer cites and annotates before each of the ten "Librarian's View" essays written by knowledgeable working librarians. Most of the essays focus on the usual topics: audience (adult reader, children, teens); content and format (nonfiction, genre fiction, audio, and visual); and tools (conducting the readers' advisory interview and using readers' advisory resources). Mary Wilkes Towner, of the Urbana (Illinois) Free Library, has written a very useful chapter titled "Tools for Readers' Advisors." Her list of online tools has since been reprinted by Moyer in the July 2008 issue of *Booklist*. David Wright's "Zen and the Art of the Readers' Advisory Interview" is illuminating and refreshing.

Moyer also includes chapters on book groups, cataloging

and classification, and collection development. (Weeding as readers' advisory tool? Of course!) By adding these chapters, Moyer has placed readers' advisory at the center of public library practice and has made a good case for its position there. Readers' advisory is also outreach; marketing and public relations are at its core. Moyer and Hollands use the last chapter as an opportunity to respond to Juris Dilevko and Candice F. C. Magown's *Readers' Advisory Service in North American Public Libraries, 1870-2005: A History and Critical Analysis* (McFarland, 2007) in a section entitled "False History, False Future." Among other thoughtful and evocative comments here is the suggestion that readers' advisory is at a crossroads, either heading "down a darker path" where we "waver and dwindle" into a fad or a surge, or toward a future as a "cornerstone of the practice of librarianship." Given the current public library fixation on the "bookstore model," "dumping Dewey," and aggressive customer service, educated and committed readers' advisors are essential. They will benefit greatly from this rich collection.—Katharine Phenix, *Adult Services Librarian, Rangeview Public Library, Northglenn, Colorado*.

What Every Librarian Should Know about Electronic Privacy. Jeannette Woodward. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2007. 222p. \$40 (ISBN: 978-1-59158-489-6).

[M]any gay kids find school libraries to be safe havens and still go there to find resources even though information is so widely available elsewhere. (Debra Lau Whelan, "Out and Ignored," *School Library Journal*, January, 2006).

While radical militant librarians kick us around, true terrorists benefit from [Office of Intelligence Policy and Review]'s failure to let us use the tools given to us. . . . This should be an OIPR priority!!! (E-mail written by an unidentified FBI official, quoted by Eric Lichtblau, "At F.B.I., Frustration Over Limits on an Antiterror Law," *New York Times*, December 11, 2005).

In our current climate, we cannot depend on our government, corporations, or even our neighbors to protect or respect our privacy. But as Jeannette Woodward shows, librarians have long been keepers of their patrons' privacy, even to the point of public scorn or job loss. Consequently, as the statements above show, our most vulnerable patrons have learned to trust us with their inquiries, while some powerful agencies see us as a particularly annoying deterrent to their dubious agendas.

Our reputation for being safe havens for intellectual freedom was earned the hard way: through ever-vigilant librarians willing to oppose authority and even lose their jobs in defense of the First Amendment. However, when it comes to technology, librarians have tended to focus on protecting computers over computer users. In *What Every Librarian Should Know about Electronic Privacy*, Woodward reminds us that now is not the time to rest on our laurels, and she provides us with some of the tools and information we need to