
Everyone loves a good story. From childhood onward, we are surrounded by and gradually internalize all sorts of stories: fairy tales, family anecdotes, novels, movies, news articles, and so on. As adults, we develop our own narratives to explain the world around us. Those who work in libraries and information centers are uniquely placed to see the power of stories on a daily basis. Until now, storytelling as a professional practice in libraries has largely been limited to children’s story hours and book clubs. However, in Organizational Storytelling for Librarians: Using Stories for Effective Leadership, library educator, trainer, and consultant Kate Marek demonstrates that the act of storytelling is not just for children anymore. Marek is among the first to apply this recent business trend to library management and leadership. As she ably illustrates, storytelling and libraries are a natural fit. Just as cultural and educational norms are transmitted from generation to generation through storytelling, so too can an organization transmit its own meaning among its workers and its customers through the power of narrative.

Organizational storytelling, although first making its appearance in the business world in the early 1990s, has recently emerged as a popular management technique in works such as Stephen Denning’s The Springboard: How Storytelling Ignites Action in Knowledge-Era Organizations (Butterworth Heinemann, 2000) and Terrence L. Gargiulo’s Stories at Work: Using Stories to Improve Communication and Build Relationships (Praeger, 2006). Marek is among the first to apply this recent business trend to library management and leadership. As she ably illustrates, storytelling and libraries are a natural fit. Just as cultural and educational norms are transmitted from generation to generation through storytelling, so too can an organization transmit its own meaning among its workers and its customers through the power of narrative.

Stories in the organizational context do not have to be as short as an “elevator pitch,” nor do they need to be too personal. Marek offers general techniques on how to develop storytelling skills, as well as useful examples of how stories can build community, communicate an institution’s vision and values, and help manage change. Especially interesting is a chapter expanding on the “library as place” idea, describing how a library building’s architecture tells its own story of the institution’s history, meaning, and goals.

Well-researched and thoughtfully presented with a wealth of useful tips and examples, Organizational Storytelling for Librarians belongs on every library manager’s bookshelf.


Plagiarism remains a perennial issue on college campuses, makes for popular fodder in the media, and appears regularly in the scholarly and professional literature. With so much already said about it, one wonders, not without irony, whether anyone can truly add anything new to the discussion. Bradley does. In keeping with the trend toward teaching information literacy skills in the context of discipline-specific research problems, Bradley gives practical guidance on how to tailor anti-plagiarism education to specific scholarly communities. Expanding on a chapter in Lynn Lampert’s Combating Student Plagiarism: An Academic Librarian’s Guide (Chandos, 2008; reviewed in RUSQ 49, no. 3), Bradley complements her theoretical claims with usable examples for stimulating discussion and debate about plagiarism with students in the classroom.

The chapters are organized by subject and focus on discipline-specific issues in the arts and humanities, social sciences, sciences, and professional disciplines. Each section begins with a brief explanation of the discipline’s citation practices and its attitude toward plagiarism. This overview is then followed by an actual case study that illustrates the complexities and nuances of the issue as they relate to that particular community. Sharing these examples with students will help them understand that plagiarism has real consequences (outside of school) and can impact their professional futures-making the ethical use of information a more relevant topic. The discussion questions based on each scenario are truly interesting and help stimulate critical thinking.

Each section is essentially a complete lesson plan; one can easily imagine incorporating the examples and questions into a presentation on plagiarism. Although Bradley advocates for a subject-driven approach, she also includes general examples that could be used for discussion in First Year Experience courses. She accommodates several different teaching scenarios so that instructors can easily create an entire session on plagiarism. In other words, she invents the wheel so librarians (or teaching faculty) don’t have to.

Those serving international students might wish that Bradley had included some discussion of how plagiarism is relative to culture, but instruction librarians, especially those new to teaching, will not be disappointed. —Meagan Lacy, Assistant Librarian, Indiana University—Purdue University Indianapolis, Indianapolis, Indiana


Herbert B. Landau is director of the Lancaster Public Library in Pennsylvania and previous director of the Milanoff-Schock Library in Mount Joy, Pennsylvania, which was named the Library Journal “Best Small Library in America” in 2006. He also is author of the The Small Public Library Survival Guide (ALA, 2008). The premise of Winning Library Grants is that current economic times and tight budgets make fundraising more important than ever. The slim guide might be called a primer for novices. In 15 chapters, Landau takes the librarian or library trustee through all of the fundamentals: identifying local foundations, initiating contact with grantors, writing proposals, and initiating outcome-based evaluation methodologies. The guide
contains good sample materials, such as a letter of inquiry, a proposal, a budget, and a grant timeline.

The book contains a six-page list of resources that causes the reader to wonder, “Do we need another basic book on fundraising?” Every major publisher that caters to the library profession has issued such a guide; for instance, a recent addition to the genre is Getting the Money: How to Succeed in Fundraising for Public and Nonprofit Libraries (Libraries Unlimited, 2009). ALA’s Big Book of Library Grant Money (2007) is not really a comparison because it is a directory profiling more than 2,300 foundations nationwide, rather than a guidebook. Landau wades into topics that are somewhat advanced (federal government grants) or not entirely appropriate for beginners (requests for proposals). He also fails to devote sufficient space to the free and useful resources available in hundreds of Foundation Center Cooperating Collections nationwide (for information about these, see http://foundationcenter.org/collections). For most public libraries, the logical first organizations of interest will be community and state private and corporate foundations; the book would be more helpful to beginners if it pointed out that most states have a directory of state foundations and that the Foundation Center has many leads on identifying local funders. A new free source for beginners is ALA’s new “Frontline Fundraising Toolkit,” which covers all the basics for starting a fundraising plan.

The bottom line: Landau has created an adequate resource for a library that has never investigated how to begin the grant-seeking process. The book, together with the many free sites offered by the Foundation Center and ALA, should enable a librarian to form a plan and execute a successful search for new funds.—Susan Hopwood, Outreach Librarian, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin