Contributions to this volume come from both public and academic librarians, who share how they have used data-driven decision making to implement change in their libraries. For example, in the opening case study, librarians from Lafayette College show how they combined quantitative and qualitative data (usage statistics and user feedback) to shift from an ownership model for journal subscriptions to an access-oriented, pay-per-view model for journal articles. They show how making this change not only cut down costs but also expanded their users’ access to science and technology titles, resulting in improved user satisfaction.

Sensitive to librarians who resist the application of corporate culture and “business speak” to the profession, the editors promise that they are not offering “management techniques” and that the case studies are not intended to be prescriptive. Although they deliver on this promise, and although the case studies they present are indeed rich illustrations of library innovation, some of them are difficult to accept as examples of planned abandonment. Rather, the economic downturn seems to have been the driving force for many of these changes, and although they are a testament to library leaders’ creativity in the face of budget cuts, they do not always demonstrate intentional, strategic planning. A clearer definition and theoretical grounding of planned abandonment might have addressed this issue and strengthened their argument.

Nonetheless, the authors’ and editors’ main message is that libraries should systematically collect and evaluate data, both quantitative and qualitative, to drive decisions about future directions—a point that is well taken and demonstrated in each of these studies. Beautifully laid out and inspiring to read, this book will appeal not only to administrators but to any librarian who is interested in the future of the library.—Meagan Lacy, Coordinator for Information Literacy, Guttman Community College, New York City


Neal-Schuman’s series of how-to manuals are typically practical, down-to-earth guides to aspects of library management and leadership. Halsted, Clifton, and Wilson’s Library as Safe Haven: Disaster Planning, Response, and Recovery is a particularly useful addition to the series. Library directors understand that they must have disaster response plans in place, and most have at least a rudimentary system for dealing with fires, floods, and other emergencies. However, they may also feel overwhelmed at the prospect of developing a response and recovery plan for every possible crisis that could befall the library. This book provides a straightforward system for devising such a plan with a reasonable amount of effort.

Library as Safe Haven features a seven-step planning process that can be implemented with minimal fuss. Chapter 1 walks the reader through the steps in completing a risk assessment tailored to a library’s location and collection, covering such issues as dealing with insurance and identifying potential outside sources to help with recovery. After discussing strategies for immediate threat responses in chapter 2, the authors explore the importance of leveraging relationships with outside resources and officials in time of crisis. The authors discuss the role of social media and the importance of personal emergency response plans for all staff in the case of a widespread disaster, such as a tornado or hurricane. The book closes with advice on providing partial or off-site library services, as well as two model scenarios of libraries creating and implementing a disaster plan.

The centerpiece of the book, however, is the authors’ discussion of a service continuity plan. This plan, unlike the comprehensive disaster plan discussed in chapter 1, is a single-page list of institutional or community contacts, contact information for the library’s internal emergency response team, community and service continuity plans, a map of the building with collections to be rescued listed in priority order, and contact information for outside resources, such as local preservation experts and the salvage and recovery companies identified during the risk assessment process. This simple double-sided sheet can be distributed to selected staff members, who should be instructed to keep this information on their person at all times. The service continuity plan alone is worth the price of this book in peace of mind and staff preparedness.

No library is immune to the risk of natural and manmade disasters. Library as Safe Haven: Disaster Planning, Response, and Recovery can be considered an essential primer on the topic: It lucidly describes a process that will give public, school, and academic library directors a large amount of peace of mind for a remarkably small expense of time and money.—Sarah Clark, Associate Library Director, Rogers State University, Claremore, Oklahoma


Statistics can be daunting, but for today’s library managers, they are an inescapable part of the job. Managers need data to guide the decisions they make. They also must provide evidence to library stakeholders of the direct and indirect benefits their libraries offer. Managing with Data, a companion volume to the authors’ Getting Started with Evaluation (ALA, 2014), provides a detailed approach to how to choose the best metrics for library assessment and how to tell a persuasive story with the resulting data.

Deciding what metrics best prove a library’s value can be a manager’s first hurdle. Collections, services, staffing, and library use are all traditional measures, and the book covers these in detail. Lists of possible metrics are provided, as well as illustrations of how they can be applied to demonstrate
value and reveal important trends. In addition to quantitative measures, the authors cover how to assess the often elusive qualitative ways a library adds value. Managing with Data also covers the benchmarking process, best practices, and how to effectively communicate results to the community or campus. Closing the loop—using results to improve practice—is often a neglected step in the assessment process, but the authors cover this in the final chapter with tips on how to use outcomes to enact organizational change.

The most striking feature of this book is its hands-on approach: It includes step-by-step examples that allow users to manipulate real data from real libraries. The data comes from the Association for College and Research Libraries (ACRL) and the Public Library Association (PLA). ACRLMetrics and PLAMetrics are online, subscription-based services offered by these organizations, and the book comes with free access to a subset of these data collections. (Only one of the data sets—academic or public—may be chosen by the reader as part of the registration process.) Readers can use these data to solve the realistic assessment challenges posed throughout many of the chapters. In a benchmarking exercise, for instance, readers are asked to compare one library’s interlibrary loan services to those of a peer institution and are guided through the process step by step. The authors also show how to use data from free services—such as the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the National Center for Education Statistics—to answer assessment questions. Additional exercises found at the end of each chapter are designed specifically for library staff. Some challenge staff to solve assessment problems (an appendix provides the answers); others promote discussion about different aspects of the evaluation process.

Assessment projects seem automatically to generate some anxiety, but by detailing how to collect data and demonstrating how the resulting information can be applied, Managing with Data helps bring the stress under control.—Ann Agee, School of Information Librarian, San Jose State University, San Jose, California


Weisberg and Toor have updated New on the Job: A School Librarian’s Guide to Success. Whether the librarian is new, seasoned, starting in a new job at a new school, or changing grade levels, this book will help with the transition. The twelve chapters are presented in a logical order, covering interviewing for jobs, getting started in a library, getting to know coworkers, connecting with students and teachers, building good relationships with administration, managing and promoting the media center, developing and articulating a philosophy, growing as a professional, and dealing with intellectual freedom, copyright, and plagiarism.

The authors provide an abundance of information in a way that is not overwhelming. Each chapter begins with a breakdown of what is inside. The sections are easy to read, and each chapter ends with a list of key ideas to take away. These ideas could easily be used as a checklist of what to do in a new library position. The sections are concise but informative. At the end of each section, the authors provide thought-provoking questions about the information presented. These questions are designed to really make the reader reflect on what was read and think about how to handle issues and everyday tasks that arise in a school library. Highly recommended for any and all school librarians.—Amanda Galliton, Librarian, Kirby Jr. High Library, Wichita Falls, Texas


Digital technologies challenge the assumptions of pre-existing legal regimes, even as they enable new modes of scholarship. Whether using others’ intellectual works or disseminating and safeguarding their own, educators and scholars often navigate a morass of issues. This audience needs guidance that is sound in practice and concise yet robust in context. Drawing on his experience offering such guidance as the director of Copyright and Scholarly Communications for Duke University Libraries, Kevin Smith offers a handbook directed at achieving these ambitious aims.

Primarily written for a US audience, Smith identifies four areas of intellectual property: copyright, patents, trademarks, and trade secrets. After explaining each area’s impact on teaching and research, the author offers compelling justification for emphasizing copyright throughout much of the book. He is thorough in outlining the considerations governing ownership of instructional and scholarly works, and his overview of institutional policies will benefit staff at all levels.

Readers will appreciate Smith’s lucid writing. Chapter 4 is a stellar example of the merits of this slim volume: in presenting a five-step process for deciding when and how to use others’ works, the author accomplishes nothing less than a crash course in copyright. Additional topics covered include open access publishing, licensing options, and technological protections. Useful recommendations abound, including an overview of publication contract clauses. The final chapter covers international contexts.

Discussions of intellectual property sometimes divide along a fault line, with philosophical abstraction on one side, and prescriptive simplification on the other. Smith’s approach is commendable for addressing practical application while empowering informed decision-making where ambiguities exist. Relevant examples illuminate the discussions throughout.

Beyond the ostensible practicality of a handbook, the author has a clear dual purpose. By bolstering stakeholder awareness of intellectual property implications, Smith invites spirited conversation about our current global digital milieu. After all, it is the future of scholarly discourse that is at stake.