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Book Review -- Monographic Musings

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Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

Column Editor: **Debbie Vaughn** (College of Charleston) <vaughnd@cofc.edu>

Column Editor's Note: The theme of this year's **ACRL Conference** is "Push the Edge: Explore, Engage, Extend!" How timely, then is the publication of **Jeannette Woodward's** new book, **Creating the Customer-Driven Academic Library**. In her new work, **Woodward** pushes academic librarians, library technical assistants, and administrators to renovate spaces and services to address the needs of Net Gen students. I recently heard an astute observation: students are smart consumers in the experience economy. If any experience — be it in a bricks and mortar locale or an online environment — does not satisfy their needs, they can look elsewhere for satisfaction. The **ACRL Conference** and **Woodward's** book both offer the opportunity to explore possibilities for academic librarianship in the future. Happy reading, everyone! — **DV**

Woodward, Jeannette. *Creating the Customer-Driven Academic Library*. Chicago: ALA, 2009. 9780838909768. 208 pages. \$58.00.

Reviewed by **Debbie Vaughn** (College of Charleston) <vaughnd@cofc.edu>

In the November 2005 issue of *ATG*, I reviewed **Jeannette Woodward's** *Creating the Customer-Driven Library* (ALA, 2004) and admitted that I was on the fence "concerning the practicality of libraries' emulation of bookstores." Since then, though, there have been changes in library and student trends: Library 2.0 has attempted to revitalize service, for example, and college students are more likely to hold jobs while attending school. In addition, my view of students' needs have evolved as well; moving from the reference desk to academic administration and undergraduate services has given me access to a more complete picture of the numerous things on students' plates. **Woodward's** new book, *Creating the Customer-Driven Academic Library*, addresses both the trans-

formations in the academic library landscape as well as the growing needs of students.

Woodward's book is divided into ten chapters that cover staffing, library livability, "low hanging fruit" that is ripe for transformation, marketing, customer service, and evaluation of progress. Notes and references round out each chapter, and an extensive index completes the book. Initially as I read the book, there was a nay-saying voice in my head: "State funding for public institutions has dramatically decreased — how can any changes in library affairs be afforded?" Perhaps this was simply a knee-jerk reaction from my pragmatic self, or a disguised discomfort for relating students and customers. Whatever the case may be, **Woodward** combats any internal arguments I might have had through reasoned

explanations of how and why libraries should move forward. Moreover, she takes into account crippled budgets and the placement of the library within the university. Using students (albeit some make-believe characters) as examples, she clearly illustrates that though institutional politics and the economic climate impact possibilities for improvement, the student experience does not take these factors into account. Students often do not know and/or do not care why things are the way they are in the library; quite frankly, why should they? Students are consumed with being students, with completing their assignments, and with budgeting their time to fulfill their academic, employment, and social commitments. It is up to library administrators and employees to fix things on the back end so that students have a positive library experience that includes learning about effective and efficient research methods and that excludes feelings of confusion, frustration, and library anxiety. Her suggestions for upgrades include small touches (changing the color of the library lobby) to shifts in library culture (grooming professional librarians as leaders and not only team players).

While **Woodward** makes critical observations of improvements that need to be made in academic libraries and things that we have missed, her writing style puts the reader at ease rather than on the defensive. Never could I have imagined that I would find a book about academic libraries so riveting. This page-turner is a must-read for academic librarians, library technical assistants, and administrators. 🦉

Something to Think About — Sometimes I Wonder?

Column Editor: **Mary E. (Tinker) Massey** (Serials Librarian, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Jack R. Hunt Library) <masse36e@erau.edu>

Just as I was becoming complacent about the profession, one of my teachers projected a problem. What of the new generation of students in the MLS program? Where are they going? What do they understand of our profession and professional ethics? How can we project what we have known and exhibited for years. Our discussion was not being critical of the people, but our generation's inability to project our own sense of purpose and history. It's almost a marketing problem as I see it. We market the business as a worthwhile endeavor and a reason for obtaining that master's degree, but we forget the human side of the profession. Our sense of purpose comes from deep in our experience and soul. We have a special need to fill each patron with

more information than he/she ever thought possible and wait for the burst of creativeness that mandates new and exciting ideas. I, personally, love to see the results of my labors and know the world may have just become a little more knowledgeable or developed because of what I do. I have watched recent students and some new librarians in their daily tasks. I see them as very competent people in their profession, but I don't see the passion or zeal connected with the reasons that we continue forward each day. Even when I am working in the periodical or microfilm collections, students come to me with questions. I walk them through how to find things so that they won't feel trapped in needing our help each time they arrive. Sometime it is just a gentle reminder they need to get them started, or

perhaps a new slant on the material or sources that our people provide. It is important for our students to develop the correct inclinations in searching for information on their subjects. At the same time, it is important for our staff to get excited about that research and find new ways to help them. Sometimes it is the encouragement and not the information that spurs a new researcher into action. I get excited for them and they catch the bug! How do we do that for our new professionals, or better yet, how do we create that spirit in their learning years?

On days like today, I really want to be allowed to teach the young folks. Perhaps the new mentoring processes started in some schools are the right way to go, and yet...we really need some one-on-ones to get the fires lit. This generation appears to have ridden in the

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