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Book Reviews -- Monographic Musings

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Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

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



Column Editor's Note: Last year, I discovered that February is Library Lovers' Month. This year, I have learned that February 9th is Read in the Bathtub Day. Admittedly, I feel that taking time to read in the bathtub is a luxury best enjoyed on at least a monthly or even weekly basis — and wouldn't it be fascinating to read the three books highlighted in this month's MM?!

I am delighted that regular reviewer **Eleanor Cook** has offered her take on ATG contributor **Jesse Holden's** work, *Acquisitions in the New Information Universe: Core Competencies and Ethical Practices*. I am equally delighted to introduce two other librarians from East Carolina University to the MM mix. **Ginny Boyer** serves as Head of Collection Management and Metadata at East Carolina University's Laupus Health Sciences Library. **Ginny** received her undergraduate degree from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and her Master of Information and Library Science from Florida

State University. **Ralph Scott**, Assistant Head of Special Collections for Public Services and Curator of Printed Books and Maps at Joyner Library, has worked as a Reference Librarian, Documents Librarian, Systems Trainer, and manuscript collection processor. He is active in shared governance in higher education and is a past President of the North Carolina Conference of the American Association of University Professors, as well as President of the North Carolina AAUP Foundation. **Ralph's** research interests include early mapping of North Carolina, naval technology in World War II, and the North Carolina flights of the Wright Brothers. He is the author of over 450 book reviews, numerous articles, and one book: *Wilmington Shipyard: Welding a Fleet for Victory in World War II*. He lives in Greenville, NC with his wife Nancy, four cats, and a Chihuahua.

I encourage you to take one (or all) of these books to the tub. Happy reading, everyone! — DV

confrontation is fantastic, providing helpful tips for working through uncomfortable situations — **Doucett** is spot-on when she points out that confrontation is inevitable in your professional life and that being prepared to handle it is key. Tips are also offered for succeeding at teamwork, though a discussion of how team contribution can positively affect one's professional development would have been a nice addition.

The third part of **Doucett's** book is posited for those that have some time under their belt as a working librarian. Much of the content contained in these chapters is aimed at the individual directly doing the work at hand — the marketing, manipulating the library's space, facilities management, etc. — however, much of this is often times out of the hands of the single professional librarian; much of the content would have been better served to come from a more generalized point of view to appear to a wider audience of professionals. Instead of marketing the library itself, how about marketing oneself and the services being offered? Instead of manipulating the physical space of the library, or being concerned with the condition of the books you have on hand, how about considering how your patron base uses the library and identifying how you can positively affect the function of the library by improving where your piece of the puzzle fits? Trend tracking should be something that every librarian does from day one on the job, not after having been on the job for years — you'll be behind before you even get out of the gate! The same is true for being familiar with the library's strategic plan, always being in tune with the library's budget, and being able to calculate your effectiveness!

Overall this book is a good read, offering a little bit of advice for everyone along the way. My suggestion would be to consider it and its suggestions as a whole and not as a roadmap to correspond with years on the job. **Doucett** says in her introduction that the book is not meant to be academic in nature, nor is it to be exhaustive or detailed, and it is not. It's a simple introduction of topics to be considered as a reference point for those eager beavers ready to burst onto the library scene, and as such it does not disappoint.

Doucett, Elisabeth. *What They Don't Teach You In Library School*. Chicago: ALA Editions, 2010. 160 pages. 978-0-8389-3592-7. \$50.00.

Reviewed by **Ginny Boyer** (Head of Collection Management and Metadata, Laupus Health Sciences Library, East Carolina University) <boyerg@ecu.edu>

Doucett's *What They Don't Teach You In Library School* provides a basic introduction to certain aspects of librarianship that every recent graduate or newbie librarian should be familiar with. The language is informal and conversational — an easy read — and offers a succinct glimpse at certain tips-of-the-trade that **Doucett** feels are integral to surviving and flourishing as a professional librarian. The book is written in a manner that would be most appropriate for someone entering or working in a public library setting or a small community college, however, the general tips for blossoming in the library world outside of specifics such as facilities maintenance are beneficial to an audience at large.

Part One serves as a guide to those individuals new on the scene and chomping at the bit for their first professional position. **Doucett** urges the reader to think critically about what's important to them in a job, to evaluate the pros and cons and see the reality of accepting the position. She talks about such practicalities as budgeting to ensure that the salary will work, considering how one might specialize within their career, and about networking, and making "Librarian" a brand. All of this is good information — important and pertinent to all job seekers in the library world. Being a newbie librarian myself, some things I would like to have seen in this chapter include a more exhaustive discussion of areas of specialty available in an academic library setting, a more detailed discussion of networking that includes recommendations for getting involved in professional organizations, and the importance of being a

yes-man — embracing all opportunities that present themselves and investing time to seek out potential avenues for resume padding.

Part Two is intended for those new on the job — to get them through the day-to-day and provide tips for integrating into the library world and the smaller microcosm within which they exist. **Doucett** elaborates on important topics such as understanding your library's culture — feeling it out and becoming a part of it; about understanding the community that you serve, managing confrontation, and striving to be a team player. **Doucett** refers to understanding your community in a manner that is directed toward understanding the library's locale, which is vital for transplants, however, equally important is understanding the smaller community within which your library functions, including the academic communities that many libraries call home. The chapter on managing

Holden, Jesse. *Acquisitions in the New Information Universe: Core Competencies and Ethical Practices*. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2010. 978-1-55570-696-8. 135 pages. \$75.00.

Reviewed by **Eleanor I. Cook** (Assistant Director for Collections and Technical Services, Joyner Library, East Carolina University) <cooke@ecu.edu>

Jesse Holden has contributed a timely book about library acquisitions that addresses the changes that have occurred in this part of our field in the last few years. Through his recent service as a "Fundamentals of Acquisitions" instructor

for the American Library Association's Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS), he realized the need for a monograph documenting these changes.

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What are these changes? There have been several major shifts in the way we acquire materials for libraries. One of the most obvious changes has to do with format. Tracking the purchase and receipt of physical entities has transformed into connecting with content. Reconceptualizing work flows to accommodate this shift is clearly important. Acquisitions work used to be focused on procurement, but **Holden** suggests that the concepts of access and service are just as important these days. The goals stated for this book are thus: 1) to serve as a comprehensive introduction to the topic for new acquisitions librarians and to help experienced acquisitions librarians understand and reconsider their roles; 2) to establish an approach that systemizes contemporary acquisitions work in a holistic fashion; 3) to serve as a basis for defining the continuing role of acquisitions practices.

Holden calls for a “radicalization” in our approach to library acquisitions, due to the overly complex environment in which we find ourselves. He states, “The time has passed when those practicing acquisitions can wait for a stack of paper orders and buy a bunch of books.” Being open and flexible is absolutely essential in today’s information universe. We must go beyond the old adages of “just in case” versus “just in time” to embrace a larger world view.

The author refers to “spheres of access” and how contemporary acquisitions work-flows must adjust to this approach. Materials that are born digital require a different mindset when attempting to gain access to them. The “monograph” as we know it now has a multiplicity of varieties. **Holden** does an adequate job covering vendor relations in this realm, although the vendor playing field continues to shrink and change at a rate that understandably makes the book a bit out-of-date when it was released (i.e., the **Baker & Taylor** takeover of **Blackwell**). He does a good job of weaving explanations of basic, old-fashioned concepts (encumbrance, for example) in with newer workplace tools (such as the need for an ERMS — electronic resources management system). He touches on the work we do today with consortia arrangements and how open access publications are having an impact on the acquisitions function.

One minor weakness of this work is that though the phrase “ethical practices” is part of the subtitle, there could be more depth to the discussion of ethics in this book. This is an aspect of acquisitions work that begs for more coverage. Also, the fact that the book itself was published using traditional methods of distribution while being focused on how these very methods are changing is a small irony — it would be great to be able to obtain this book as an eBook, for instance. All librarians start thinking about the new models of scholarly distribution as they themselves publish. **Holden** captures the changing nature of the acquisitions realm while it is indeed in the midst of upheaval.

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Zabel, Diane. *Reference Reborn: Breathing New Life Into Public Services Librarianship.* Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2011. 978-1-59158-828-3. 401 pages. \$55.00.

Reviewed by **Ralph Scott** (Assistant Head of Special Collections for Public Services and Curator of Printed Books and Maps, Joyner Library, East Carolina University) <scott@ecu.edu>

Will reference rise again like a Phoenix from ashes of **Wikipedia**, or will it evolve into the library social networking center of the 21st century, or into something else? *Reference Reborn* attempts to answer these and other contemporary issues surrounding the constant change that is the modern day reference service desk. Divided into seven sections, *Reference Reborn* covers topics diverse as: the new user base, improved service models, new reference librarian role models, new reference tools, collection development, staffing the desk, and education and training of reference practitioners.

POTS refers to Plain Old Telephone Service, which still exists for many folks throughout the world in an age of digital phones. We also have PORS or, Plain Old Reference Service. This is the service that I grew up with at the feet of **Constant Mabel Winchell**, Head of Reference at **Columbia University** and author of *The Guide to Reference Books* 7th edition (ALA, 1951). PORS has been around for a long time and still forms the basis of reference service in many libraries. It is what scholars around the world have come to expect from their librarian. However, like telephone service, reference service has been transformed by the digital age. This work attempts as the subtitle says to bring “new life into public services librarianship.” The world of the Internet has truly transformed the way in which information is delivered to readers. This book refers to the vast forests of unused reference tomes languishing on bookshelves, while lightning fast reference service is delivered via texting on seamless Web connections that never fail. A new generation of Web savvy information providers are springing forth from rejuvenated library schools to serve the twittering masses. Former reference “tools” which were actually

removed from shelves, opened, consulted, and analyzed to answer reference questions, are now replaced by comprehensively indexed Web search engines that spew out relevant documents reflecting a variety of viewpoints on any topic. Readers’ Advisory Services of the past have been replaced by the **Oprah Winfrey** show and other talk shows that help the reader “find themselves through literature.” Why would any information provider actually want to suggest a client read anything beside the latest **Lisbeth Salander** adventure anyway? Instead of being a reference librarian waiting quietly (it’s a library remember) behind a tall counter for the next patron, the new model “trend tracking, data analyst, IT troubleshooter, staffing and marketing specialist” will blast forth from the library portal seeking new worlds to enlighten.

The truth of course is that the new information world will be a mix of Plain Old Reference Service and newer technologies. People will still need to be taught the skills of reading and writing. This is still largely done through the use of the codex book. Reference questions are still answered by going to the stacks and looking up “information.” One, however, cannot locate every piece of information in the book stacks, nor on the World Wide Web. Both research methods will exist for the foreseeable future. *Reference Reborn* provides an excellent insight into where some aspects of “public service librarianship” are headed in the 21st century. Plain Old Reference Librarians will enjoy reading about these new initiatives, and this book may in fact inspire a few to introduce new technologies into their workplace. For the “trend tracking, data analyst, IT troubleshooter, staffing and marketing specialist,” *Reference Reborn* will become the Pilgrims’ Progress of a new generation of public service librarians. 🌱

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A/V A to Z differs from other similar works in that it covers far more than technical terms. In fact, its great strength is that it provides definitions of words and phrases “unique to the distribution, exhibition, and business of entertainment.” Explanations of film and video techniques stand side-by-side with definitions of multimedia platforms, legal concepts, and trade association practices. The definitions and explanations are understandable, straightforward, and as jargon-free as possible. **Kroon** mixes his crisp, precise definitions with longer, encyclopedic entries that require multiple definitions and fuller explanations. And as he notes in his introduction, this dictionary is both descriptive of the way terms are being used,

as well as prescriptive in discussing how the words should be used. In addition, there are etymologies for 1,600 of the terms covered. This single volume is nicely produced with numerous black and white photos that break up the somewhat dense text.

A/V A to Z: An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Media, Entertainment and Other Audiovisual Terms is a serious special-purpose dictionary that is inclusive and thorough. It will appeal to academic libraries supporting communication as well as media and film studies programs. Larger public libraries with patrons needing a comprehensive but reader-friendly dictionary of audiovisual terms will also do well to consider it.

Questions about **McFarland** eBook availability may be directed to **Beth H. Cox** at <bcox@mcfarlandpub.com>. 🌱

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