2016

Book Reviews--Monographic Musings

Regina Gong

Lansing Community College Library, gongr1@lcc.edu

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Recommended Citation

DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.7323

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Column Editor’s Note: We’ve survived another winter season (thankfully a mild one for us in MI this year) and I’m sure we’re now enjoying the warm-up that spring time brings. We’re also probably busier as the semester comes to an end with the frenzy of final exams and the anticipation of our students marching during graduation ceremonies. I’m particularly excited to see our students graduate in May knowing that the Library has played an important role in their journey as college students.

Anyway, for this issue, we have an array of new books that deal with data such as Managing Scientific and Research Data, and the Accidental Data Scientist: Big Data Applications and Opportunities for Librarians and Information Professionals. Digital humanities and data curation is an area that libraries are now actively involved in and the book Digital Curation in the Digital Humanities: Preserving and Promoting Archival and Special Collections digs deeper into that with particular emphasis on preserving special collections. If you want to know more about competitive intelligence and how it can harness our work as information professionals, then take a look at Competitive Intelligence for Information Professionals. Academic libraries and especially those in administration (like directors and deans) are always struggling with staffing issues and so this book on Strategic Human Resource Planning for Academic Libraries: Information, Technology and Organization makes the case for strategic approach to human resources decisions. It provides a practical layer to this work that might provide good options and shift focus to the information needs of current researchers. This would serve in a strategic and empathetic way?

There are many challenges facing library directors and administrators these days. This is especially true among academic library directors who are feeling the pinch on a number of fronts. Between the changing needs of researchers, the growing scarcity of usable space on campus, flat budgets and the eternal question of where to house a legacy print collection, there are sufficient worries to keep directors from sleeping well at night. However, behind each of these problems lies a more difficult and delicate challenge for the library director. How can the library’s workforce adapt to the changing needs of the communities we serve in a strategic and empathetic way?

Michael Crumpton, Assistant Dean for Administrative Services at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), writes a well-researched guide to help library directors better understand the important implications of their human resources decisions. Crumpton is a prolific author and presenter on various topics addressing the administrative needs of the library (see https://library.uncg.edu/hr/uncg/clist.aspx?id=1946).

In his introduction, Crumpton references a “barrel of fun” that one might find at a fair or amusement park. You walk through a large rotating barrel as you move from one part of the amusement park to another. The goal is to stay upright, though many do not make it through without a tumble. That is one way to look at the work associated with strategic human resources in an academic library — trying to stay upright when the world is literally moving under your feet. The other way to look at it might be more literal — that managing library change is difficult, but human resources implications are the “barrel of fun” that directors cannot avoid.

Crumpton writes a good primer on the issue of human resource issues and practices for academic library directors and administrators. This short work is well documented and provides excellent charts and tables to help anyone finding themselves in an administrative capacity at an academic library. The approach that Crumpton takes in exploring the world of strategic human resources management is one that any business school staffer (such as myself) could appreciate and applaud. While he cites a great number of articles and studies that focus on human resources as it relates to libraries, there are many reports and resources that are drawn from higher education and human resource management fields. This gives the work a well-grounded approach to the specific issues that library directors are facing.

If I had a wish, it would be that he provided more practical examples of the shifting nature of library work. While he addresses new job skills and titles found in academic libraries, one of the bigger issues we are facing through this change is how we move staff currently filling traditional positions into the new jobs that libraries need. Making these changes during position vacancies is far easier than moving staff and libraries at the point of need. Another wish would be to learn more about the changes at UNCG over the last few years as academic libraries shift focus to the information needs of current researchers. This would give a practical layer to this work that might provide good options and suggestions for library directors at similar institutions.

Overall, this is an excellent work that provides readers with a solid framework for creating a strategic approach to a library’s most important resources, its librarians and staff.


Reviewed by Ashley Fast Bailey (Senior Collection Development Manager, YBP Library Services) <aibailey@ybp.com>

Knowing where to start with a marketing plan can be overwhelming. There is so much information available and so many places that information is housed. Marketing the 21st Century Library by Debra Lucas-Alfieri takes a big picture look at various aspects of marketing for today’s library. She uses her experience of marketing libraries and provides a clear, concise guide that is a great place to start when gathering basic information on what library marketing is, where one should start, and steps involved in implementing successful marketing strategies for the 21st century library.

Lucas-Alfieri breaks her book into seven easy to navigate sections: history of library marketing, the market plan, how to market and promote the library, partnerships to promote the library, how to market and promote the library, and the challenge and opportunities that libraries today face. By taking time to break out and write in simple terms each of these areas of marketing, libraries can gain a clear overview of marketing in today’s landscape and how to use practical applications in their library. In addition, Lucas-Alfieri also provides case studies throughout the text to illustrate these practical applications and how-to’s.

After giving a brief history of library marketing, Lucas-Alfieri gets into the details about a library marketing plan in regards to research and

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assessment. By outlining several types of research and data gathering to start a marketing plan, she lays the framework for the coming sections of this book. Emphasis is placed on defining the library’s mission and vision before marketing takes place, and Lucas-Alfieri stresses the importance of not skipping this in the process. A library must know its patrons and community including their vision and mission before marketing takes place. She goes on to provide assessment tools and ideas to use before jumping into the marketing plan.

After a library defines its mission statement, the next step is to lay the ground work for the marketing plan through assessment and research. Only then can one move on to writing and implementing the plan. The subsequent chapter outlines ways to accomplish this. Though it does not provide examples of actual marketing plans, it does a great job of defining types of plans, steps to begin thinking about creating and implementing a plan, and follow through. Lucas-Alfieri provides numerous case studies and questions after each chapter to help reinforce the various aspects of the library marketing plan.

Lastly, she goes into ways to promote the library through partnerships and various forms of media. Lucas-Alfieri brings up innovative ways to partner with the library community, mainly focusing on academic libraries, to move the marketing plan forward. Through promotion and visibility, the library can really market itself as a relevant part of the campus ecosystem.

Marketing the 21st Century Library is a great resource for someone who is starting to think about creating a marketing plan for their library, or wanting to gain a general overview of how marketing plays a role in the current state of libraries. Through case studies, well-written and clear chapters on concepts from what is a marketing plan to how to assess and manage a marketing plan, Lucas-Alfieri has written a well-rounded overview of marketing the library in the 21st century.


Reviewed by Emma Oxford (Science Librarian, Olin Library, Rollins College) <eoxford@Rollins.edu>

Managing Scientific Information and Research Data by Svetla Baykoucheva presents a broad overview of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) publishing — from professional ethics to lists of helpful resources to differences in common practices and everything in between. The subject matter is more far-reaching than its title would suggest and well-worth reading for librarians who find themselves serving scientific researchers. As a chemist turned information professional with an extensive publication record spanning numerous journals, Baykoucheva is well-placed to provide guidance on this subject. She is currently the head of the White Memorial Chemistry Library at the University of Maryland, College Park. This is her first book.

Every chapter of Managing Scientific Information contains some insight or list of resources that librarians will find useful. Some of the most interesting chapters are transcripts of interviews that Baykoucheva conducted with various scientists and information professionals, including Eugene Garfield, the founder of the Science Citation Index, which would later become Web of Science. These interviews add valuable additional perspectives on research and publishing that many librarians might not have considered. Baykoucheva has conducted numerous interviews with professionals in the field in recent years, all of them available at http://www.asciinfo.org/content/interviews (including those featured in the book).

Librarians will also find useful the lists of relevant Websites and organizations that appear in several chapters. For example, there are lists of publishers involved in “new models of scientific communication” (in Chapter 2), organizations concerned with ethical research and publishing practices (in Chapter 3), and online data repositories (in Chapter 8), among others. Chapter 5 includes a comparison of several different prominent databases of scientific literature and data. The author’s evaluation of how to decide the best database for a given subject is astute. She also cites several additional studies for readers interested in further exploring the subject. In fact, every chapter includes an extensive bibliography of scholarly works for additional reading.

The book’s great strength is its discussion of aspects of scientific publishing that researchers and authors probably understand on an instinctual level but that librarians may not be aware of. For example, why have preprint archives been so successful in physics and gained no ground in chemistry? How might Mendley’s tracking of its users’ research habits make some researchers uncomfortable using this citation management system? What are some of the nuances surrounding peer review in scientific disciplines? Baykoucheva also provides some commentary on the use (and misuse) of impact factors in judging scientific work, and authors and librarians alike will appreciate her analysis on these issues. Even Garfield, the creator of the journal impact factor, touches on its misuse in his transcribed interview.

If there’s one flaw in this book, it is that it covers too many aspects of scientific publishing. Indeed, the book’s title is somewhat misleading, since it suggests that it is about a much narrower aspect of the publishing endeavor than it actually is. Not until Chapter 8 ("Coping with ‘Big Data’: eScience") does it get at what the title implies the whole book is about. But for the most part, this is a failure of the title, not the text. Only once or twice does it seem like Baykoucheva includes more information than is relevant in a given chapter.

Overall, librarians and others are likely to gain valuable insight from Baykoucheva’s perspective as a scientist turned information professional, and this book is well worth a read.

Hakansson, Charlotte, and Margareta Nelke. Competitive Intelligence for Information Professionals. Amsterdam: Chandos Publishing, 2015. 9780081002063. 152 pages. $78.95

Reviewed by Christal Ferrance (Instructional Design Librarian, George Mason University) <cferranc@gmu.edu>

Competitive Intelligence for Information Professionals is a quick read with a lot of substance. The authors are two senior information professionals from the competitive intelligence (CI) field. Hakansson is an information specialist managing business intelligence projects in several fields (pharmaceutical, medical, and business). In 2011 she founded a consulting company, Novolentia, which offers competitive intelligence and information management assistance to businesses, organizations, and public areas. Today Hakansson manages her company and also is a Team Leader Research Support for the Swedish University’s Agricultural Sciences Library. As co-author, Nelke began her career in public and academic libraries but quickly moved into the corporate world as a library manager. Since 2004 she has been an independent consultant for her firm, I.C. at Once, which offers coaching, training, and investigations in CI, information management, and business development.

The book has 12 chapters, with each focusing on different aspects of competitive intelligence and the information professional, in order to provide a comprehensive overview of the process. Chapter I defines competitive intelligence and its value or importance to organizations, businesses, and individuals. The authors highlight the common reasons for competitive intelligence, for example, globalization, individualization, competition, threats, IT development, and crises. However, they also add complexity (in order to make things better, new skills and tools are needed), demand for knowledge (the best information is needed, not random, unfiltered information), and common view (the whole organization working towards common goals and vision and the breaking down of silos) to their list of important reasons. Chapters 3-6 explain the PCMAC model (plan & prioritize, capture, manage, analyze, and communicate). Often the analyze phase is regarded as the most important, yet the authors claim that the plan & prioritize phase is actually the most important because it is where “the essential questions are asked” (p.25). Particularly illuminating are tables 9.1 and 10.1.

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The book provides several useful and even some unique features. A key feature is how the author illustrates the theory by discussing practical applications. The real-life examples demonstrate the larger theoretical concepts of the digital humanities. The list of references is also a valuable survey of the current literature and online tools. Sabharwal also provides an in-depth study of the role of social media in the world of social curation. He reviews several online resources, like YouTube, Instagram, and Storify, and explains how they can be used as digital humanities tools. Overall this book is recommended for those who want to better understand how current practices can be used to improve the curation of special collections and archives for both teaching and research needs.


Reviewed by Michelle Polchow (Electronic Resources Librarian, George Mason University) <mpolchow@gmu.edu>

Disruptive technology continually seeps into the jobs of librarians and information professionals. “Big data” seemingly appears overnight, accelerates from newspaper buzzword into newly designed academic degree and now frequently appears within high demand job requirements. Amy Affelt, writing from her position as a corporate librarian, takes the data-naïve on a compelling read, consciously introducing new concepts and skill building tools required to navigate this data-driven world. A key theme throughout this book is that the necessary abilities to work with data are the very ones inherent to the professional principles of research and information science management. The author constructs parallels from familiar concepts such as data verification, data integrity, and critical analysis of sources, then maps these themes to demonstrate how to produce expert research services using the clout of “big data.”

**The Accidental Data Scientist** is a useful primer, beginning with vocabulary, introduction to processes and overview of data use, and management techniques. Affelt, a reference librarian herself, delivers an invaluable resource list for keeping-up-to-date, sharing her curated websites, blogs, Twitter feeds, and more, that in turn can immediately benefit research customers and reinforce ongoing professional learning. So as not to overwhelm readers, it focuses on best practices that leads to high value deliverables, such as customized intelligence (that machine algorithms have yet to replicate), and qualifies why librarians and information specialists should partner as key players in developing “big data” projects. The case studies illustrate new and emerging job challenges within the fields of healthcare, transportation, entertainment, legal, law enforcement, atmospheric science, labor, education and politics. Overall, a lot of information is covered in a very effective and easy to read manner.

When reading a guidebook, the rhetoric is often inconspicuous, but this book presents an interesting dichotomy. Starting on page one, the author states that the profession of librarianship seems under attack with industry behavior labeled as “coming too late...to respond to game changers,” “missed opportunities,” and a vocation which has “fallen prey.” But in between the reprove, Affelt attempts to counterbalance, acknowledging that any concept using the word “big” can bring about intimidation, then rallies with a pep talk for overcoming fear. So on one hand, the tone is critical towards the profession, but then endeavors to promote librarians as adept partners for “big data” projects. Within the profession, this book is perhaps just the type of motivation needed to help solve job image problems, but if shared with a broader audience, the negativity may reinforce dismissive attitudes from those who don’t understand the profession. A second quandary was the author’s decision to exclude illustrative case studies from the field of research and information management. Although Affelt notes that her selection of industries was based on the early adopters of “big data,” perhaps it misses the opportunity to not only educate, but also to equip librarians, during a
evidence are discussed in individual entries as are various branches of forensics ranging from forensic accounting to forensic psychology. There are also articles that discuss professional aspects of forensics ranging from specific tools and methods to relevant associations and institutes and from key publications to the importance of professional ethics.

The articles vary in length from 500–3,000 words and are written in a straightforward and descriptive style. Each entry starts with a brief definition of the topic and an indication of its significance. The remainder of the essay offers a clear explanation of the topic that provides relevant and useful information as well as offering a firm foundation for further research. Sidebars are used to emphasize certain elements within a topic and as you would expect, “see also” references guide readers to related articles. In addition, there is a category guide in the last volume that is helpful in grouping articles into broad subject areas. All entries have brief bibliographies. The set is not heavily illustrated but includes black and white photos as well as some tables and charts interspersed throughout each volume. Overall the entries are well organized and the layout is inviting and readable.

The second edition of Forensic Science is a scholarly, fact-based treatment of the topic that has grown substantially in interest and popularity. The essays are succinct and accessible and provide a resource that will be appreciated by high school students, undergraduates and the informed lay reader. Libraries interested in a handy, less involved treatment may also want to consider A Dictionary of Forensic Science by Suzanne Bell (2013, 9780199594009, $21.95; eISBN: 9780191757648) published by Oxford University Press.

Extra Servings

According to their Websites a number of reference publishers are releasing some new and upcoming titles including:

- The SAGE Encyclopedia of Theory in Psychology (May 2016, 9781452255679, $375) is a two-volume set edited by Harold L. Miller, Jr. of Brigham Young University that “drawing together a team of international scholars… examines the contemporary landscape of all the key theories and theorists, presenting them in the context needed to understand their strengths and weaknesses…”

- The SAGE Encyclopedia of LGBTQ Studies (May 2016, 9781483371306, $595) is a three-volume set edited by Abbie E. Goldberg of Clark University that “examines and explores the lives and experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) individuals, focusing on the contexts and forces that shape their lives. The work focuses on LGBTQ issues and identity primarily through the lenses of psychology, human development and sociology, emphasizing queer, feminist and ecological perspectives on the topic…”

- The SAGE Encyclopedia of Corporate Reputation (July 2016, 9781483376516, $375) is a two-volume reference edited by Craig E. Carroll, visiting scholar at New York University that for the first time, explores “the vast and important field of corporate reputation… in the format of an encyclopedic reference. The SAGE Encyclopedia of Corporate Reputation comprehensively overviews concepts and techniques for identifying, building, measuring, monitoring, evaluating, maintaining, valuing, living up to and/or changing corporate reputations…”

ABC-CLIO/Greenwood has also added a couple of new titles:

- Folktales and Fairy Tales: Traditions and Texts from around the World, 2nd Edition (Feb. 2016, 978-1-61069-253-3, $415; eBook, 978-1-61069-254-0, call for pricing) is a four volume work edited by Anne E. Duggan and Donald Haase, with Helen J. Callow that “is the only multivolume reference in English to offer encyclopedic coverage of this subject matter. The four-volume collection covers national, cultural, regional, and linguistic traditions from around the world as well as motifs, themes, characters, and tale types. Writers and illustrators are included as are filmmakers and composers — and, of course, the tales themselves…”

- Asian American Culture: From Anime to Tiger Moms (March 2016, 978-1-4408-2920-8, $189; eBook, 978-1-4408-2921-5, call for pricing) edited by Lan Dong “provides comprehensive coverage of a variety of Asian American cultural forms that enables readers to understand the history, complexity, and contemporary practices in Asian American culture. The contributed entries address the diversity of a group comprising people with geographically discrete origins in the Far East, Southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent, identifying the rich variations across the category of Asian American culture that are key to understanding specific cultural expressions while also pointing out some commonalities…”

Salem Press also has two new titles:


- Fashion Innovators (April 2016, 978-1-61925-898-3, $145; e-ISBN: 978-1-61925-899-0, $145) is a two-volume set that provides “biographies of nearly 200 individuals who had an innovative and influential impact on the development and evolution of the modern fashion industry…”

And last but not least, Oxford University Press is planning some new releases:

- The Oxford Handbook of Music Therapy (March 2016, 9780199639755, $185) edited by Jane Edwards is intended for “the entry level trainee — meaning students of music therapy can easily locate information they need for assignments and learning about clinical populations in preparation for placement; each model of practice is presented by the founder or international leader in the approach, resulting in an authoritative text…”

- The Oxford Handbook of the Prophets (Sept. 2016, 9780199859559, $150) edited by Carolyn Sharp offers a “wide-ranging discussion of ancient Near Eastern social and cultic contexts; an exploration of focused topics such as the person of the prophet and the problem of violence in prophetic rhetoric; and sophisticated historical and literary analysis of key prophetic texts…”

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period when the profession could most benefit from applying “big data” techniques to solve complex library and information science problems, generate economies of time and promote monetary savings for their own institutions.

Despite the seemingly negative tone towards our profession, this text remains a highly useful reference. By taking emerging and complex issues and breaking them into bite-size morsels, the benefit extends to those who want to serve more effectively in their current role and educates prospective information professionals. With the book’s aerial view highlighting the frequent intersections where “big data” creates problems and information science provides answers, some readers may even be on their way to exploring new career paths by reading this book. ☂