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Book Reviews--Monographic Musings

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Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

Column Editor: **Regina Gong** (Head of Technical Services and Systems, Lansing Community College Library) <gongr1@lcc.edu>

Column Editor's Note: *By this time, you all must be busy gearing back to the start of the fall semester and the beginning of another academic year. I cannot believe that I've been with ATG Editorial Board and editor of this column for a year now. So far, we have reviewed forty-five books in all the seven issues I've had the chance to edit. It's been a very rewarding experience working with my ATG editor Katina Strauch, co-editor Tom Gilson, and our ever-patient Toni Nix who always keeps me in check. Of course, thanks to our amazing book reviewers whom I've worked with this past year. I hope you all stay so we can read and review more books in the future. Lastly, thanks to all the publishers that send out new books my way. Keep them coming.*



We have a stellar line up of new books for you in this issue so I hope you like it. If you want a free book and if you enjoy writing reviews, let me know by contacting me at <gongr1@lcc.edu>. Happy reading! — RG

O'Connor, Steve. *Library Management in Disruptive Times: Skills and Knowledge for an Uncertain Future.* London: Facet Publishing, 2015. 9781783300211. 158 pages. \$110.00.

Reviewed by **Corey Seeman** (Director, Kresge Library Services, Ross School of Business, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor) <cseeman@umich.edu>

In the very first paragraph of the first chapter, the tone for this excellent work was set. In his chapter on leading change, **Ian Smith** referenced the apocryphal expression: “may you live in interesting times.” Well, if you are working in academic libraries, these are most certainly “interesting times.” And there might be few better guides to help directors and managers navigate through the future of libraries like this great work edited by **Steve O'Connor**.

The challenge of managing a library operation today is twofold. First, the information needs from the communities we serve are expanding in directions that we are not all situated to support. Our long-standing philosophy of collection for today and tomorrow is being called into question by more immediate needs demonstrated by the faculty and students. Second, the challenges that we face are not created in a vacuum. Instead, it is the actions of academic administrators reflecting on the institutional priorities that have a greater impact on our work. These forces create disruptive times that require a new way of thinking through problems. Libraries then, need to be nimble and responsive to the forces working against them.

In this wonderful book of essays, **Steve O'Connor** has brought together library leaders from all over the world to share their vision of how libraries will not only survive through these disruptive times, but also thrive. **O'Connor** is a prolific author who served as library director at both the **University of Technology, Sydney** and **Hong Kong Polytechnic University**. He has assembled a tremendous group of authors including **Bill Fisher**, **Michael Robinson**, **Colin Storey**, among others. These chapters focus on change management, business fads, engagement, managerial agility, professional associations and other topics. One of the nice features incorporated by all authors is the extensive use of management literature in exploring these subjects. This provides a more well-rounded approach to the solutions offered by these authors. A few chapters worth highlighting:

Choy Fatt Cheong, University Librarian at **Nanyang Technological University** in Singapore, adapted **Ranganathan's** Laws as the five rules of librarian engagement. This great essay focuses on what librarians should do to better serve our community. These rules of engagement place the focus on providing excellent service for those that use our libraries. While many in the profession are seeking out librarian-centric futures, often based on assuming an educator role, **Cheong** shows the path forward as being a critical team-member for faculty and student research.

Daniel Forsman, Library Director for the **Chalmers University of Technology** in Sweden, wrote about agile principles and how they apply to management of a library. The focus of the article was on the reorganization that took place at the library in 2013 as well as the adoption of Scrum a few years earlier. Scrum methodology comes from the rugby term of players huddling together. **Forsman** does a nice job of relaying how this approach has brought different groups of the library together to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the users. And he references an episode of *The Simpsons*, so you know it has to be good.

Bill Fisher, professor at **San Jose State University School of Information**, wrote a great piece about management fads and the impact on the librarian community. And while this might be applicable to library management, it is also a concern as libraries follow each other into areas such as makerspaces, data support services, and scholarly communication that may, or may not, be an issue on their particular campus.

This wonderful book is a must read for library administrators and managers who are tasked with leading their library into a new world order. These truly are interesting times.

Roemer, Robin Chin and Rachel Borchardt. *Meaningful Metrics: A 21st Century Librarian's Guide to Bibliometrics, Altmetrics, and Research Impact.* Chicago, Illinois: ACRL, 2015. 978083898755. 251 pages. \$76.00.

Reviewed by **Margaret M. Kain** (Reference Librarian for Education, University of Alabama at Birmingham Libraries) <pkain@uab.edu>

Meaningful Metrics: A 21st Century Librarian's Guide to Bibliometrics, Altmetrics, and Research Impact, addresses the significance of bibliometrics and altmetrics to research and publication. With the influx of online content, open access publications and online analysis, moving beyond bibliometrics is more important than ever. Rather than speak to discipline specific faculty and researchers, the authors address librarians and library students. Librarians provide the crucial connections between faculty and research, assisting faculty to navigate publication metrics for the purpose of promotion and tenure.

Beginning with an overview of metrics, **Roemer and Borchardt** identify resources that may be used to capture metrics in the online world, so alternative Web-based metrics can be incorporated into researchers' scholarly portfolios and practices. Even the seasoned librarian will appreciate the in-depth overview, discussion of the various forms, as well as, information about how and where to capture metrics. A discussion of bibliometrics and altmetrics are important for researchers in all disciplines. As librarians know, the measure and availability does, however, vary by discipline. While the sciences or STEM vendors will consistently maintain, compile and analyze metrics; metrics for arts and humanities are not as readily available. The authors detail how altmetrics serve to help reign-in the new, non-traditional sources, balance citations based metrics, and capture more of the disciplinary specific metrics.

Meaningful Metrics is divided into four major sections: impact, bibliometrics, altmetrics and special topics. For further granularity, four levels of metrics are also identified: individual scholarly communications, venues that produce scholarly contributions, individual authors publishing output, and institutional or group output. Using these four levels, the more traditional bibliometrics and altmetrics, associated with each category, are discussed. Evaluation and screen shots of metrics resource tools are provided. This is quite helpful to librarians who do not have access to the tools, as well as, those tasked with evaluating these resources for the purpose of potential library acquisition. While many librarians are familiar with the commercial vendor tools, such as **Journal Citation Reports (JCR)**, and **Scopus (SJR)**, some may not be

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aware that other tools are available. **Roemer** and **Borchardt** point out, for example, that **Google Scholar** citations are considered authoritative and comprehensive for citation-based connections in scholarly articles, especially in those subject areas not extensively covered in JCR and SJR.

For those versed in scholarly metrics, *Meaningful Metrics* is a concise refresher. It provides an overview of metrics, offering some insight and suggestions for obtaining altmetrics, plus how to provide researchers with tools of quantitative and qualitative measures that could be useful for promotion and tenure. Additional information that is provided in separate boxes may be overlooked, but should not be, as these contain nice explanations or reminders. At first glance, some of the content in these boxes appear rather elementary; however, even seasoned librarians may find these quick examples useful. An extensive glossary at the end of the text is a helpful addition.

Meaningful Metrics is a wonderful resource for librarians and researchers with varying levels of professional expertise. It provides the more seasoned librarian with an overview, updates, as well as, potential “new” ways to obtain valuable measures, especially in subject areas where traditional measures are not as prevalent, and the less seasoned librarian with a primer on metrics. **Roemer** and **Borchardt** offer insightful food-for-thought about how to meet the metrics information needs of faculty in this new digital environment; helping faculty identify, and gather metric data to document their professional progress and attain tenure. While a print book would be a great addition to any collection, the ebook is now available as an open access publication from the ACRL. *Meaningful Metrics* is recommended reading for all librarians.

Ackermann, Eric, editor. *Putting Assessment into Action: Selected Projects from the First Cohort of the ASSESSMENT in Action Grant*. Chicago, IL: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2015. 9780838988138. 216 pages. \$52.00

Reviewed by **Leslie D. Burke** (Collection Development & Digital Integration Librarian, Kalamazoo College Library)
<Leslie.Burke@kzoo.edu>

Putting Assessment into Action is one book I’m very eager to read about mainly because our reference librarians at **Kalamazoo College** were members of the second cohort of **ACRL Assessment in Action** program. This book provides a detailed report of the twenty-seven projects done by the Assessment in Action first cohort.

The first part of the book is on Assessing Information Literacy/Library Instruction which comprises more than half of the book. The majority of the projects in this section relate to first year experience programs, indicating that assessment of these programs is a high priority for most academic programs. Assessing Services is the major focus of the second part, with one project each discussing Outreach and Spaces. The third part largely focuses on institutional data already available with three projects mentioned in the Longitudinal Assessment. The research plans come from a wide variety of libraries, both in size and in focus, so there will be something applicable to any librarian wishing to pursue their own project.

Each of the chapters is a discreet project from the cohort and provides an introduction to the project, how they framed their research question, how methodologies were chosen, partnerships on campus, limitations to the study method, results and learning, and suggestions for what they could have done differently. Recommendations for future research are also helpful.

This book will be of wide value to those who may be considering their own assessment project at their institution, regardless of whether they have had the training provided from the **Assessment in Action** grant. Each of the chapters contains relevant list of resources that were consulted in the execution of the project. This will enable or help another researcher find the background documents or rubrics used in the assessments.

Those who are hoping to examine their first year experience library interactions will benefit the most from this book, since the bulk of the research endeavors described here relate to first year student experiences. Each of the projects is different enough to account for a wide variety of situations and I was easily able to collect bits and pieces of information that could be used in a local situation or in my institution.

I not only find it particularly helpful that the book was arranged by topic, but also how the graphics at the top of each chapter reinforce the type of project it was addressing. For instance, chapter 10 shows a graphic that clearly indicates “2nd to 4th Year.” This helpful guidance will allow readers to quickly skip to the sections where they have the most interest. While each chapter had its own references in the Notes section at the end of the chapter, I wish that the editor provided a “de-duped” and complete list of references at the end of the book so that all works consulted could be examined. This book will be a welcome addition of case studies to the small, but growing, literature on assessment in libraries. It may help your library’s staff get their creative juices going, as it did mine.

Porter, Sarah. *To MOOC or not to MOOC: How Can Online Learning Help to Build the Future of Higher Education*.

Boston: Chandos Publishing. ISBN: 978-0-08-100048-9.
137 pages. \$78.95

Reviewed by **Anne Driscoll** (Education Librarian, George Mason University) <adrisc02@gmu.edu>

Are MOOCs a passing fad or a viable option to attract and deliver content to learners? Through a series of 20 interviews with experts around the world, **Porter** explores this question. **Porter** provides a wealth of information on the development, evolution, attracting students and planning for the future.

The book begins with a thorough overview of the development of and types of MOOCs. While in existence for several years it has only been within the last three to four years that MOOCs have really skyrocketed. Porter discusses the “big three” providers: **Coursera**, **Udacity**, and **EdX**. All of which were developed at elite higher education institutions and have differing philosophies and market share.

The development of MOOCs and their increasing popularity can be tied to the increased demand for online education and the expansion of MOOCs outside the United States to Europe in 2014. The inception of European consortiums such as **OpenEdu EADTU**, and **Inversity** caused a huge increase of MOOCs in 2014.

The MOOCs format is not one size fits all. They differ from the commonly thought of model of video lectures, assessment and online social spaces to non-traditional ones such as Digital Storytelling from the **University of Mary Washington** whose focus is those wishing to become professional photographers and which relies heavily on social media to deliver and drive content. MOOCs vary from the nontraditional model where students learn through shared resources, discussion and debate to those which do not have a fixed start up and end date to those which MOOCs which are meant to be used by professionals and/or those with a casual interest in a topic.

Through a series of case studies, readers become familiar with course design, delivery methods, possible business models, quality assurance and the marketing of MOOCs. Types of institution vary widely from traditional university to those already heavily involved in online education, to those who see an opportunity to draw attention to a specific program in the hope of attracting more students.

A key feature of the book is that it draws upon on best practices of universities with existing MOOCs. A MOOC is very time and labor intensive and can be quite costly to develop. **Porter** does an excellent job stressing the importance of exploration of current and possible future competitors, choice of a business model which drives what one hopes to achieve, course governance and management, development of course materials, copyright issues, choice of platform, accreditation of courses versus certificate for course completion, and engaging and assessment of learners — all of which will drive the courses’ future. Lastly the book focuses on the future of MOOCs. **Porter** believes MOOCs future are driven

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by understanding potential students, use of data analytics to spur student retention and course completion as well as to improve MOOC content.

To MOOC or not to MOOC is an excellent book which provides a wealth of information on the history and development of MOOCs. It also provides a solid framework for those exploring the possibility of diving into MOOCs. The reader is left with a solid understanding of what is a constantly changing area of higher education. MOOCs are as diverse as the institutions which create them. Correctly deployed, they could serve a vast untapped market of learners.

Kelley, Keith J. *The Myth and Magic of Library Systems*.
Waltham, MA: Chandos Publishing, 2015. 9780081000762.
187 pages. \$86.95.

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

The world of library information technology (IT) and library systems can be an overwhelming topic. **Keith J. Kelley**, former the Director of Systems at **Western Michigan University**, wrote *The Myth and Magic of Library Systems* to address the misunderstandings of IT within the library, how to run a library systems department, and explaining library systems. Picking up the book, I was under the assumption that it would cover the roles of ILS and other “library systems” related topics within the library. Though a couple of chapters were dedicated to this topic, he focuses on the bigger picture of IT within the library, customer service and the library user, and looking towards the future of Library IT and Library Systems. Before his work at **WMU**, **Kelley** spent many years working as an IT consultant for national corporations. He holds a Master of Science in Computer Science and is currently working on his PhD in Computer Science from **Western Michigan**.

Kelley begins by laying an outline for Library IT. Coming into libraries from the IT sector, he defines how libraries view IT versus how IT professionals view IT. By setting this groundwork, a foundation is laid for his thoughts on structuring a library systems department. Many times a librarian takes on the role of systems librarian, but **Kelley** advocates that someone who was moved into this role might know just enough to be dangerous, and instead the library should rely on the expertise and experience of an IT professional to take on this role. With changes happening so fast in the IT realm, it is imperative that a professional be proficient in the current standards and continue to take courses, classes, or webinars to stay up to date on trends and forecasting what is next.

Another major part of IT in libraries is customer service; both in regards to the library users and the internal library staff/librarians. **Keith J. Kelley** dedicates a few chapters to explaining how to address and structure the customer service experience in regards to the IT department and help desk. Advice and examples are given on how to approach the best service to the library users, improving operations, and education for the library customer base.

In addition to the public facing aspects of IT, **Kelley** discusses the makeup and structure of the library systems department. He draws on his experience and talks about the roles within IT, what types of positions are needed to support and maintain an effective department, posting and recruiting for IT jobs, and ongoing education needed to keep an IT department relevant. After creating a well-rounded IT department, *The Myth and Magic of Library Systems* goes into detail on analyzing and problem solving issues many libraries face.

A big part of Library IT is staying current on trends and working to predict the future. **Kelley** writes that the library industry tends to adopt things after industry does. So, looking at what has happened in information technology within the last five years is a good way to predict what’s coming. By following blogs and reading current journals, one can see what’s next. In addition, drawing on past trends and historical documentation can help predict the trends in our industry and allow a library to draw on its own past data to see where it is headed. He dedicates a couple of chapters on how to do this.

Kelley writes that the IT department touches all aspects of an organization, so a library must look to the future. He goes into some of the trends that are coming to libraries, such as LSPs (Library Service Platforms) replacing traditional Integrated Library Systems (ILS), how the cataloging record is not as important as it was when created over 50 years ago, and how modern discovery tools have overtaken traditional OPACs (online public access catalogs). Keeping up with these trends by attending vendor webinars and conference sessions, in addition to resources such as webinars and online tools, can help with the direction of library workflow and create efficiencies.

The Myth and Magic of Library Systems concludes with budgeting when implementing new technologies, helpful strategies to deal with one time funds, and tips, strategies and solutions. The author does a good job of giving an overview of the library systems department and how to serve the library users in the most efficient way possible. By providing a baseline understanding of a library systems department and the IT librarian, this books delivers a complex look at this multifaceted area of libraries from a unique perspective that brings a unique IT view into the library.

Dow Schull, Diantha. *Archives Alive: Expanding Engagement with Public Library Archives and Special Collections*. Chicago, IL: ALA Editions, 2015. 9780838913352. 352 pages. \$85.00

Reviewed by **Emma Olmstead-Rumsey** (Adult Services Librarian, Cromaine Library) <eolmstead@cromaine.org>

Archives Alive is an ambitious book. Although at first glance it resembles a catalog of best practices and program suggestions, it is certainly not a program cookbook. Instead, the purpose of *Archives Alive* is to assist libraries in systematically transforming their archival or special collections from neglected repositories into collections that are vital, relevant, and used as the basis of programs that foster community engagement with the library and with local history.

The author, **Diantha Dow Schull** (library consultant at **DDSchull Associates** and past president of **Libraries for the Future**) approaches this goal on two levels. By providing examples of successful transformative efforts in specific institutions, she offers individual libraries some models to follow. In addition, the way that **Dow Schull** has selected, arranged, and contextualized these examples addresses her equally important objective of surveying the field of public engagement with archives and special collections in order to start a conversation within the library profession about the importance of this engagement.

Although the author addresses herself to public libraries, most of the book’s content is equally relevant to colleges with small- or medium-sized archival collections. The way that these materials have the potential to be used in college libraries — as a way to introduce students to the concept of primary source research and to local or institutional history, rather than a repository of source material to be consulted by professional researchers, much more closely resembles the role of archives in public libraries than in large research universities. The same trends that **Dow Schull** identifies in her introduction as shaping the use of public library archival collections (an increasing emphasis on active engagement with materials, the transformative effect of digital technologies, and a focus on access and visibility) are and should be affecting how archival collections in smaller college libraries are being managed.

The wide scope of this work and some unfortunate editing and formatting choices can make *Archives Alive* somewhat difficult to use, and at least some background in archival and special collections is assumed. This volume is designed for use in libraries with at least one trained archivist and where there is a will to implement change. If you are a public services librarian managing a special collection on your own, or if your “archive” is a room of uncatalogued banker’s boxes filled with old college newspapers, *Archives Alive* is not likely to be much help to you. However, for certain readers, the investment required to get the full benefit of this work will be a good one. If your institution is receiving a substantial new collection, going through the strategic planning process, or making the revitalization of its archival or special collections a priority, I highly recommend that whoever is leading the process take the time necessary to get the most out of this work. 🌱