



Review

The Black Belt Librarian: Real-World Safety & Security

Warren Graham. Chicago: American Library Association, 2012. 80 pp. ISBN: 978-0-83891-137-2. \$45.00.

Reviewed by Abby Koehler
ILS Software Administrator
Pueblo City-County Library District
Pueblo, CO

"It's a bloody *library*, and it should look and feel like one," (p. xvi) author Warren Graham acknowledges in the opening pages of his updated *The Black Belt Librarian: Real-World Safety & Security*. "Just because we are a 'public building' doesn't mean you can build a campfire in the middle of nonfiction" (p. xvi).

True, that. It's also true that Graham's 20+ years of patrolling a multi-branch library district and hearing countless stories from front-line library staff on his national speaking tour give him more than a little anecdotal evidence for his straight-up, pull-no-punches approach to personal security.

Also true: Graham is not a librarian. As readable as this short thesis may be, Graham's writing shows definite bias toward stereotypes library professionals have rallied against for years.

At times, this style is acceptable; his stab at humorous library marketing phrases leads into a concise and useful list of twelve fundamentals for safe and secure operations at the library. On the other hand, there are times when Graham just does not seem to

appreciate who his audience actually is. "Why in the world would anyone who does not like people want to work in a library?" (p. 23) he writes, shocked and dismayed. His assumptions about library spaces and staff do little to support the supervisor who is trying to engage employees in new or better service models.

However, assumptions aside, there are plenty of gems on these pages that could work well in a comprehensive customer-service program. From self-reflecting surveys to sample security logs, Graham includes a little something for all levels of public-serving library staff. If your average clientele has not tried to pull one over on you, feel free to skip this title. But if you've ever engaged a patron who saw you as the one and only obstacle to a perfect research paper, a future job, or even adequate hygiene, give this title an hour or two of your time. Graham's core idea, while no longer innovative, could certainly reinvigorate your library's approach to daily tasks and situations: "No library wants problem patrons, but they are coming. I for one would rather be ready for them" (p. xii).

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