



You Don't Look Like a Librarian: Shattering Stereotypes and Creating Positive New Images in the Internet Age

Ruth Kneale. Medford, NJ: Information Today, Inc., 2009. 216pp. ISBN: 978-1-57387-366-6. \$29.50.

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You Don't Look Like a Librarian is Ruth Kneale's fun look at how librarians are portrayed stereotypically and how certain works of literature, film and music deconstruct or confirm these images. Using a chatty writing style and far too many exclamation points, the author begins by exploring the stereotypes and then lists some of the more popular culture productions, such as the film *The Librarian*, that refute the stereotypes, before moving into real-life examples.

The two real treasures in this book are the profiles of contemporary librarians and the appendices. The profiles showcase a small group of librarians, primarily from academic or special libraries, who explain their work and how they don't exemplify the stereotype of a librarian. Many librarians speak to collaborating with colleagues and creating friendly environments for patrons. However, most of the examples deal with digital technologies, while leaving out the teaching aspect of the field of information literacy and the librarians-as-educators movement. Kneale's librarians speak about using Twitter or Facebook within the library; most of the librarians admit to owning a blog. These examples seem restrictive, as if Kneale is defining a non-stereotypical librarian as one who embraces technology as the only way to move libraries and librarians into the Internet Age.

The appendices contain two surveys and an excellent bibliography. The first survey was completed by librarians and identified that stereotype perceptions had changed little over the past seven years. The second survey, completed by library patrons, showed that the respondents are comfortable talking with librarians and appreciate the work they do. The surveys are a mixture of quotes and data and are a compelling insight into how librarians view themselves and how others view them.

Kneale points out that these stereotypes “stem from the fact that people don’t have a very good idea of what librarians do” (p. 25). So, if this is indeed the problem, rather than discuss items that refute this image, why not write a book for non-librarians that explains what librarians do? That would address and perhaps resolve the problem of librarians and stereotypes far more rapidly than this book and others like it. But this book is written primarily for librarians and more or less preaches to the choir what it already knows. Kneale’s book is a fun little bit of fluff with a few good ideas and a useful bibliography, but it does not present a remedy to the public’s often incorrect perception of librarians.

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