



Thinking Outside the Book: Essays for Innovative Librarians

Carol Smallwood (Ed.). Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2008. 273 pp. ISBN: 978-0-7864-3575-3. \$45.00.

Reviewed by Jennifer F. Mincey
University Library Technician
Holds Coordinator – Access Services
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Greensboro, NC

Libraries and librarianship have changed greatly in the past decades. Librarians are creating new services, outreach methods, and responsibilities for their libraries and the communities they serve. The work and influence of librarians are not limited to the four walls of a library as librarians become spokespersons for their local community, authors and editors, teachers, and masters of cutting edge technology. Carol Smallwood's *Thinking Outside the Book* contains 79 essays written by 71 contributors who are described as "innovative colleagues in the trenches." This book is designed as a tool to inspire librarians and library school students to "look[ing] outside the book" for creative and innovative ways to contribute to this changing field.

This book is divided into 20 sections organized by subject with two to seven essays in each section. Each essay spans three to five pages. As a whole, library school students and new graduates beginning their careers will get the most from this book as an informative tool offering advice and examples of real life work expectations and accomplishments after graduation. While written for all types of libraries, some sections of this book are clearly written for academic libraries, others for special libraries, public libraries, or school media centers. Each section is appropriately labelled for easy access to the essays most valuable to an individual seeking specific information and advice on a topic with examples from different types of libraries.

Many essays offer general guidelines in a how-to style. For example, the essay “Collaborating on Library Publications” offers answers to the questions why and how to collaborate on a library publication, where to publish, and even whose name goes first on the publication. This is pertinent for academic librarians working towards tenure and any librarians collaborating on publications. Special librarians and archivists would be interested in the essay “The Life Stories Project: Collecting Oral and Written Histories,” which outlines the important questions to consider when creating an oral history collection by describing the process used for the Life Stories Project in Illinois. This project was designed to celebrate 75 years of National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Librarians looking for grant opportunities would benefit from the essay “Grant Writing and How One Grant Turns into Two.” This is written in a memoir style and recants the tale of Victoria Packard’s grant request to house the traveling exhibit “Alexander Hamilton: The Man Who Made Modern America” and ended with a second grant to fund the play *Alexander Hamilton: In Worlds Unknown* at the same time. There are significantly fewer articles of direct interest to school media specialists. However, “A School Library Media Specialist in Australia” describes the school media specialist Melissa Allen’s research study of whale sharks at Ningaloo Marine Park. Her essay demonstrates the benefits of conducting a scientific study outside the library to provide more resources and a better learning experience for students.

The essays in *Thinking Outside the Book* offer advice and issue a challenge to librarians across the field to continue taking on new responsibilities to adapt to the changing library environment. Each essay attempts to illustrate how librarians have gone beyond the stereotype of the library as a somber box of books to emphasize the variety of roles and responsibilities of librarians. As innovative leaders in the information exchange process, librarians are reaching out with new services and patron outreach initiatives.

©2010, J. Mincey. *Journal of Library Innovation* is an open access journal. Authors retain the copyright to their work under the terms of the following Creative Commons license: Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 (United States)
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/us/>