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Management Basics for Information Professionals, 2nd ed. [Book Review]

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***Management Basics for Information Professionals*, 2nd ed. G. Edward Evans and Patricia Layzell Ward. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, c 2007. 567p. \$65 (ISBN 978-1-55570-586-2)**

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I find more to like in the second edition of *Management Basics for Information Professionals* by G. Edwards Evans and Patricia Layzell Ward than I did in the first edition.¹

While the book is primarily “intended for students in archive, library, and related information programs,” I will focus my review on its secondary purpose as a source “for information professionals seeking a regular update of relevant sources of literature related to library and information center management.” (p. xx)

The basic structure of the book remains the same. Part I, (pp. 1-78) gives background on defining management, a history of management theory, the operating environment, and diversity. Part II, “Management: Knowledge and Skills,” is the longest (pp. 79-355) with ten chapters that treat various management topics including marketing, decision making, delegation, and leadership. Part III, “Managing Resources,” (pp. 357-502) provides guidance on managing people, money, technology, and physical facilities. Part IV, “Career Development and Your Future,” is the briefest section (pp. 503-534) and concludes with the inevitable “looking forward.” An extensive Name Index (pp. 535-544) and Subject Index (pp. 545-566) complete the volume.

Each chapter begins with two quotes that are less clichéd than usual and draw especially on the wisdom of Maurice Line and Peter Drucker. The authors break up each chapter with various text boxes that give, for example, additional resources, points to ponder, tips, or short exercises. The best new feature is the “key points to remember” that appear at the end of most chapters and some major sections. These points help the naïve reader by underscoring the most important lessons among multiple concepts of differing importance within the text. Chapters conclude with the list of references for items cited and what the authors call a “launching pad” instead of the more common “suggestions for further reading.” With their generally recent publication dates, these “launching pad” resources can serve as a collective select bibliography of the best literature in the field.

While Evans and Ward have their didactic moments, they mostly avoid the temptation of offering “magic bullets” as a way to assure success and stress the ambiguities of both management theory and practice. Unlike a cookbook with prescribed recipes, they offer a list of ingredients and skills that can be combined to come up with tasty and not-so-tasty results. They provide examples of

well-planned failures as well as successes and give a particularly absurd example of the inflexibility of rules where one employee each year agreed to be “unacceptable” at performance appraisal time to satisfy management demands. These concrete examples, coupled with generally good writing, partially allay the terminal dullness found in so many textbooks and help avoid the smugness that I criticized in the first edition. Finally, they stress the differences between non-profit and for-profit management since this factor complicates the life of a library manager by requiring first a definition for “success,” a simple given (profit) in the corporate world.

I would particularly like to recommend the chapter on managing money. I found it useful for defining budget practicalities such as cash or accrual accounting and for stressing the principles of budgeting more than techniques such as zero based budgeting that are often reduced in practice to nothing more than the common model of last year plus or minus.

Readers might also consider the seventh edition of *Library and Information Center Management* by Robert D. Stueart and Barbara B. Moran, published almost simultaneously in mid-2007. Both books are intended as library and information science texts and cover virtually identical topics. Any preference may be more a matter of taste than of substance.

While *Management Basics* remains more useful for those in large libraries with complex management structures, I would nonetheless recommend it for many information professionals as a better than average systematic introduction to management theory and practice. With its excellent organization, detailed table of contents, comprehensive indexes, and “key points to remember,” it can also serve as a reference resource on specific topics.

Finally, there are dangers in reading a management textbook during a single week rather than in smaller doses. With all there is to learn, with all the ways to make mistakes, with all the outside pressures, it is no surprise that many newer librarians do not want to become managers. While this was certainly not the intention of Evans and Ward, I came away wondering how I could have possibly not only survived but enjoyed my twenty-five years as an academic library manager.