

1-1-2005

Fundamentals of Collection Development and Management [Book Review]

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Recommended Citation

Holley, R. P. (2005). Fundamentals of collection development and management. [Book Review]. *Library Resources & Technical Services*, 49(1), 57-58.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/slisfrp/39>

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Book Reviews

Edward Swanson, Editor

Fundamentals of Collection Development and Management. By Peggy Johnson. Chicago: ALA, 2004. \$60; ALA members, \$54 (ISBN 0-8389-0853-5)

I find much to recommend in Peggy Johnson's *Fundamentals of Collection Development and Management*. In her own words, "[t]his book is intended for those with little experience in collection development and management—students preparing to enter the field of librarianship and experienced librarians with new or expanded responsibilities" though she also hopes that "the combination of history, theory, current thinking, and practical advice also will be of interest to seasoned selectors" (xi).

In the first chapter, she gives a history of collection development and an overview of the issues that will reappear in the eight chapters that follow. The next five chapters progress logically through the traditional steps in collection development (organization, planning and budgeting, developing collections, managing collections, and encouraging use through marketing and outreach) before treating special topics (electronic resources, cooperation, and collection analysis) in three separate chapters. Though electronic resources have their own chapter, one of the strengths of this book is that Johnson does an excellent job of integrating this new category of materials throughout her discussions. She also stresses how electronic resources are causing a radical re-evaluation of the theory and practice of collection development.

Johnson has artfully assimilated an immense wealth of knowledge to create a text that is much more read-

able and interesting than is usually the case for introductions to a major area. The writing is crisp and clear. She includes sufficient detail while avoiding numbing lists of facts. I especially like the fact that she often introduces a topic by placing it first within the context of general scholarship on the subject and then within broader library practice before treating the specific collection development aspects. Special touches include an extensive glossary that reduces the need to encumber the text with definitions and a list of "selection aids." Each chapter includes an extensive list of references and suggested readings that include URLs to Internet resources. I found myself checking references more than usual to see where I could find additional information on the topic. All but the first chapter ends with a case study that invites the reader to apply the knowledge learned in the chapter; my students can expect to find one or more of them on their next final examination. A detailed index completes the volume.

My main concern is the focus on large academic research libraries as the norm for collection development. While Johnson does not say so in her preface, it quickly becomes apparent that she writes first about large academic libraries as the standard before discussing public, school, and special libraries as particular cases. She thus often makes general statements that are true for academic libraries but not necessarily so for the other three types. To give an example, "[t]he classed analysis model describes the collection, current collecting levels, and future collecting levels in abbreviated language and numerical codes, most typically according to the Library

of Congress Classification scheme" (77). The statement offhandedly ignores that almost all public and school as well as many special and academic libraries use the Dewey Decimal classification scheme.

A second consequence is the lack of attention to topics of little interest to academic libraries. The section on censorship and intellectual freedom is too short and would have benefited greatly from a discussion of what to do when the censor arrives. As the type of library with the least well defined user community, public library collection development specialists need more information about market research, as she calls the traditional information needs assessment, than three pages. She also does not treat the special issues for smaller, steady-state libraries where adding one book requires removing another and where preservation is not a serious concern. This lack of detail on topics of concern to public and school libraries seriously diminishes the book's usefulness as a text for collection development in library school.

My second, less serious concern is a vacillation between telling it like it is versus telling it like it should be, the practical versus the theoretical. She often provides an honest assessment of the realities of collection development. For example, her statement that "[e]ven the most aggressive selector may run into a brick wall with some departments and some faculty members, who fail to respond to any library initiatives" (190) helps assure new librarians that lack of success in their liaison efforts may not be their fault. On the other hand, her section on skills and competencies implicitly assumes that all library school students

have taken a course in collection development, though this is an unjustified assumption since collection development is seldom a required course. (In fact, librarians without a collection development course may be the best market for this book.) Similarly, the long section on written collection development policies neglects to prepare the reader for the fact that many libraries of all types do not have useable, current policies. In both these areas, I would have expected Johnson to provide some basic statistics as she does so well for many other collection development topics.

Overall, I recommend this book highly for present and future academic librarians, particularly those in large libraries, who wish to learn the fundamentals of collection development. Experienced collection development librarians could profit from the summary of recent developments and research and also from the extensive bibliographies. Public, school, and special librarians, on the other hand, may find large portions to be irrelevant to their collection development activities and would need supplemental readings on important topics such as intellectual freedom, community analysis, and outreach.—Robert P. Holley (aa3805@wayne.edu), Wayne State University Library and Information Science Program, Detroit, Mich.

Protecting Your Library's Digital Resources: The Essential Guide to Planning and Preservation. By Miriam B. Kahn. Chicago: ALA, 2004. 104p. \$40; ALA members, \$35 (ISBN 0-8389-0873-X)

Most library professionals have been dealing with computers and digital technologies long enough to have run into personal cases of a data disaster: a disk that's mysteriously unreadable; a corrupted file; a file lost because of a system crash or an obsolete file format. As a profession and a society we are increasingly dependent

upon computers for both individual daily work and management of institutional data. We entrust our valuable intellectual resources to digital storage systems, and therefore we must address how this investment can be safeguarded. Understandably, the issue of digital preservation is currently an important area of research within cultural heritage institutions as well as the larger information technology community. Although there is consensus on some aspects of what is needed for digital preservation, it is an area in the early stages of development with many unanswered questions and undecided standards. An authoritative, cohesive digital preservation program is probably still several years in the future. In the meantime, information creators must use what guidance is available to insure the safety of their data, both in day-to-day operations and long-term access.

Protecting Your Library's Digital Resources is an attempt to provide libraries and other cultural heritage institutions with "a practical 'how-to' guide to plan for the future of their data" (vii). To do this Kahn brings together two sides of the data protection issue—disaster recovery and digital preservation—and divides the book into two related sections. Section 1 addresses the issues relating to ensuring short-term safety of resources, and Section 2 looks at factors affecting long-term preservation. The final chapter of the book consists of checklists that can be used to address the issues raised in the two main sections.

Kahn begins chapter 1 by discussing some of the most common causes of data and operations loss, including viruses, systems crashes, and power or telecommunications outages. She uses these situations to emphasize the importance of data back-ups, both of personal and of network files. Despite emphasizing the importance of individual backup of personal files, Kahn does not provide any practical suggestions for encouraging this type

of behavior within an organization. She goes on to make the recommendation that whichever backup method is being used, it should be tested to verify that it works as expected.

Chapters 2 through 5 primarily deal with the creation of a disaster response plan. Kahn discusses the personnel roles needed during recovery and the necessity of setting priorities in the recovery effort. The importance of clear and thorough documentation is addressed, as is the desirability of testing the disaster recovery plan. Although Kahn recognizes that the "total loss of equipment or building" (24) is the least common disaster, many of her suggestions seem to focus on precisely this type of situation. Despite this focus on an unlikely eventuality, these chapters raise some important questions to consider when developing a disaster response plan.

In the smaller second section covering the importance of planning for long-term preservation of digital files, Kahn outlines issues that need to be considered before beginning a digitization project and notes that digitization projects are much more than simply scanning. She points out that it is important to consider the source of funding for maintenance after seed or grant money runs out. Many of the issues raised are important, but this brief treatment provides a bare overview of the factors that contribute to good digital project planning. In pursuing such a project, there are many works that will provide a more systematic and thorough guide for project planning and development.

Kahn goes on to provide an overview of techniques for retaining digital files (copying, reformatting, migration, and emulation). Her treatment of the subject provides a basic introduction to the options and issues involved but leaves one with the sense that there is no correct method to choose (data loss of some sort being inherent in every choice except emulation, which is deemed of question-