

BOOK REVIEW / CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

The Information and Knowledge Professional's Career Handbook: Define and Create Your Success.

By Ulla de Stricker and Jill Hurst-Wahl. Oxford, U.K.: Chandos Publishing, 2011. 283 pages (soft cover), ISBN 978-1-84334-608-1 CAN\$102.00.

Ulla de Stricker and Jill Hurst-Wahl have written *The Information and Knowledge Professional's Career Handbook* for "current and future colleagues in all the professions associated with information, knowledge and learning" (p. 1). Much of the information and advice in the *Handbook* will be familiar to anyone who is actively seeking information about how to find and successfully gain employment. This book expands the audience for that advice to those who may be thinking "what now?": professionals who are interested in being promoted, getting a raise, changing employers or fields, or are simply wanting to maintain a current position without feeling stagnant. As a relatively short book aiming to provide advice in virtually every area of the information professional's career, no single topic is exhaustively explored. The authors often recommend that the reader refer to another resource for more information; sometimes this recommendation includes reference to a specific resource, at other times the reader is instructed to put their own information skills to work. Chapter topics include negotiating compensation, writing résumés and cover letters, dealing with difficult work situations, networking, job hunting, and organizational culture, winning support for your proposals, mentorship, and even determining your "work personality". Each chapter is broken down into specific aspects of the larger topic, for instance in the eighth chapter, "Navigating organizational culture: understanding politics", sections include "Becoming familiar with the organizational structure and culture", "Gain political power", "Create a common bond", "Deal with conflict" and so on.

The *Handbook* can be read straight through or the reader can pick and choose the parts they are interested in. It is easy for readers to flip back and forth, go off to do more research about a specific topic before continuing to read, or to skip portions that are not of immediate interest. There are many anecdotes and references to the experiences of the authors and their colleagues, including a chapter of "career snapshots" for a variety of information professionals, and a chapter describing the "career journeys" of both authors. Throughout the *Handbook*, the authors' recommendations are backed up with real life examples, and occasionally hypothetical situations are presented for the reader's consideration. The tone of the writing is friendly and conversational; it is as though the authors are talking with a colleague. Both of the authors actively provide mentorship to other information

professionals, and the values and information that they discuss in the 13th chapter, entitled "Passing it on: collegial support or mentoring", is apparent throughout the rest of the text. The reader is, in effect, being mentored by the authors.

Both Ms. De Stricker and Ms. Hurst-Wahl are experienced and active members of the larger library community, especially in special or corporate libraries and as self-employed consultants. Some of their experiences and advice may not map as directly onto other library environments as the reader might like; however, the ideas and intentions behind the advice is always very clear, which makes adapting their specific tips to other environments easy. For instance their specific recommendations for work attire are likely more formal than necessary for many workplaces; however, the idea that it is better to err on the formal side and to start off conservatively while you are learning the culture in a new workplace makes good sense.

Ms. Hurst-Wahl and Ms. De Stricker encourage readers to mark up the text and margins, to add their own ideas and experiences, and to pull out the pieces that they can apply, while skipping over that which they cannot. Judging from the state of my own copy it would be fair to say that *The Information and Knowledge Professional's Career Handbook* is a thought-provoking overview with practical information about virtually every aspect of the information professional's career and career planning. For those considering any of the "what now?" possibilities in their own careers, the *Handbook* can provide a good starting point for determining what you want, how to get what you want, and what to do when you get it. The suggested price is not printed in the *Handbook*, but a quick search finds new copies being sold through Amazon.ca for \$141.00 and at the OLA Store for \$102.00 (as of October 24, 2011). This is significantly more than the \$80.00 or so that I had expected based on purchasing other professional library publications (caveat: previous purchases have not included books about career planning). Considering the size and binding, the fact that readers are likely to need other resources, and the likelihood of readers being on a tight budget, it may be worthwhile to borrow or share the *Handbook*, or to look for a second-hand copy.

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