

## BOOK REVIEW / CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

**Introduction to Health Sciences Librarianship.** Edited by M. Sandra Wood. New York; London: Haworth Press, c2008. 493 pages (soft cover). ISBN 13 978-0-7890-3596-7. US\$120.95.

This review of *Introduction to Health Sciences Librarianship* could have been entitled, *You Had Me at Introduction*. I was hooked from the first chapter, with Mary Moore's overview of health sciences libraries and librarianship. Although the whole book reads like a textbook for graduate students in information studies, it goes into sufficient depth for practicing librarians to also reap the benefits of reading it.

M. Sandra Wood's book is organized into five sections: introduction, technical services, public services, administration, and special topics, for a total of 18 chapters written by 24 established librarians, professors, and library administrators. The authors provide current practices and future perspectives for librarians working across the spectrum of health sciences libraries, whether they are in public, academic, hospital, or other special libraries.

The introductory section consists of the above-mentioned overview followed by a chapter by Logan Ludwig on the health care environment. For those considering using this book as a textbook for a health sciences librarianship class, this chapter may be too dense for future health sciences librarians. In Canada, this book will need to be supplemented with additional readings on our health care system, as it almost exclusively describes the health care environment in the United States, with no mention of their neighbor to the north.

Collection development is covered by two chapters in the technical services section. There is some overlap in content; the first chapter, by Laurie L. Thompson and Mori Lou Higa, deals with journals, and the second chapter, by Esther Carrigan, Mori Lou Higa, and Rajia Tobia, focuses on monographs and digital resources. For the most part the authors describe collection development issues that are common to all areas of librarianship; chapters are clearly written, and examples and resources used in the discussion are specific to health sciences librarianship. Once again, the focus is on collection development as it applies to the United States, and Canadian copyright law is not considered. This section ends with an excellent chapter on organizing resources for information access, written by Maggie Wineburgh-Freed, with an added bibliography of cataloguing tools and general resources for organizing information. Similar appendices with suggested readings or useful links are also found at the end of various chapters and add an overall value to the text as a reference resource.

A successful introduction to health sciences librarianship would not be complete without discussing evidence-based medicine, information literacy, and the literature of the different health sciences disciplines, including reference sources, MEDLINE, and other relevant databases. The aforementioned subjects are found in the seven chapters devoted to public services. Those who are new to librarianship will also benefit from Elizabeth R. Lorbeer and Cindy Scroggins's overview of the challenges faced by libraries

across the board to providing access to physical and electronic materials. Although not exactly new to the profession, I recently made the switch from physical sciences and engineering to health sciences, and therefore I greatly appreciated the chapter on health informatics by K. Ann McKibbin and Ellen Gay Detlefsen. Described with wonderful clarity, this chapter helped me to understand how bioinformatics relates to other informatics domains. Another great chapter in this public services section is "Marketing, public relations, and communication" by Patricia C. Higginbottom and Lisa A. Ennis. We can all benefit from advice on marketing our services, and this chapter is short but focused, with real life examples of recent library approaches.

As a new manager I was looking forward to the section on administration. I came away with some practical advice; however, this section attempts to cover too much for an introductory text. For example, it may be difficult to get excited about the issues around managing personnel until you find yourself in such a position; this is another argument for owning your very own copy of this book. Elizabeth Connor's chapter on library space planning introduced the topic well and included a list of suggested readings that I plan to return to at a later date.

"Consumer Health Information" by Catherine Arnott Smith is a notable chapter in the special topics section. Smith managed to answer all of my questions about consumer health information; this chapter is an example of how "introduction" in the title of the book does not do it justice. We expect introductions to scratch the surface of its subject, but this text goes much deeper than expected and provides an invaluable working summary of health sciences librarianship. Canadian readers will be pleased to know that it fittingly describes the Consumer Health Information Service of the Toronto Public Library.

The "A day in the life" feature is a nice compliment to the theoretical aspects of the subjects covered in this book, as it provides readers with a peek into the typical daily tasks performed by and the workday schedules of given information professionals. This enjoyable feature appears in many sections of this book. For example, the average day of a collection development librarian, a hospital librarian, and a consumer health librarian are all included.

I recommend that you not only buy this book for your library or for your personal collection, but also that you take the time to read it. *Introduction to Health Sciences Librarianship* is a timely view of the world we know and a serious contribution to health sciences librarianship. New librarians entering the field should be given a copy of this book as a general practice. It is a great jumping off point for discussion.

**April Colosimo**

*Life Sciences Library*

*McGill University*

*3655 Promenade Sir William Osler, 3rd Floor*

*Montreal, QC H3G 1Y6, Canada*

*E-mail: [april.colosimo@mcgill.ca](mailto:april.colosimo@mcgill.ca)*