

BOOK REVIEW / CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

The Accidental Library Manager. By Rachel Singer Gordon. Medford, N.J.: Information Today, 2004. ISBN 1573872105. 362 pages (includes index). CAN\$33.44.

The title of this book hooked me in. I am a librarian and also recently an “accidental manager”, as an organizational reshuffle made me the proud “den mother” of 10 staff (unfortunately not library staff). So I thought this book might offer some tips to help me cope.

Rachel Gordon is a librarian who has written and published extensively on the topic of career development. She currently has three books available. Gordon’s book *The Accidental Library Manager* is aimed at the librarian who becomes a manager but without a planned step-by-step process up the career ladder. These librarians come to a management job by various routes (e.g., unexpected retirement, organizational shake-ups, deaths, or simply by being in the right place at the right time). Although they have likely had at least one “library admin and management” course in school, it quickly becomes evident that school courses and real everyday management conditions are not the same thing. However, Gordon believes that, for most people, a combination of existing library skills and a willingness to learn and grow will create the foundations for a successful management career. She states, “Your entire career as a librarian has helped you develop communication and leadership skills.” Now this book shows you how to go ahead and use them.

Management skills such as budgeting, handling personnel performance issues, collection development, and scheduling are some of the topics covered in the book. Surprisingly, there is little regarding the care and feeding of library boards, an oversight I found interesting. One chapter I found useful was an overview of a number of management styles — everything from Ranganathan’s laws to IS9000 certification. A second chapter of great interest was the result of a survey Gordon conducted. The survey looked at what library staff identified as good and bad traits in a manager. How interesting and reassuring to see how perceptive staff are.

Bottom line — Gordon states that “your job as a manager involves getting people to do their best work and reinforcing their commitment to both institutional and personal goals and objectives.” If you can do that, you can go home at the end of each day a satisfied, albeit “accidental” library manager.

For a look into this book’s content and a listing of useful links, go to the Web site at <http://www.lisjobs.com/talm/toc.htm>.

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