

BOOK REVIEW / CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

The Librarian's Skillbook: 51 Essential Career Skills for Information Professionals. D. Hunt and D. Grossman. Information Edge, San Leandro, Calif. 2013. Softcover: 192 p. Price: Variable. ISBN: 978-0989513319. Available from: www.librarianskillbook.com.

The Librarian's Skillbook originated from a workshop series by the authors called "Expand Your Career Potential", and this likely accounts for the book's practical orientation and accessibility. In a series of easily digestible, 3–4 page sections, Hunt and Grossman present 51 skills for information professionals in their self-published work (table of contents available at: http://www.librarianskillbook.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/librarianskillbook_toc.pdf). These sections or sub-chapters take a format similar to a structured abstract, with descriptions and (or) definitions of the skill, an example of the skill in action, tips for acquiring the skill, and a short list of suggested readings. The skills, which range from "Electronic Indexing" (Skill #2) to "Getting Buy-In" (Skill #45), are grouped into broad topic areas: computer and technical skills, business and management skills, interpersonal skills, attitude skills, and intangible skills. The book concludes with a chapter on strategies for acquiring and developing new skills, and it contains a worksheet for building a personal learning plan.

Although the format of the book is generally well conceived, with the brief and highly structured subchapters making for a quick read, there are times when the format seems to burden the content. The "Tips for Acquiring this Skill" section of each subchapter often becomes repetitive, with the same handful of suggestions (finding volunteer work or a project in a small, nonprofit organization) being offered again and again. The authors would have done better to remove this section from the individual skill summaries and devote more attention to fleshing out Chapter 10, a general section on strategies for acquiring and developing skills. The "This Skill in Action" section suffers a similar problem, with the text being drawn from a narrow range of examples deriving from one of the author's personal experiences or that of a librarian they know and admire. Although personal anecdote can be interesting and informative, some of the unevenness of the content may owe itself to the limitations of sticking closely to the authors' own expertise and experiences in enterprise,

document and digital asset management, knowledge services, digital archiving, and online systems and databases. For instance, closely related skills such as document management, enterprise content management, records management, and digital asset management are each given an individual subchapter, whereas content creation, information architecture, and user interface design are combined into one subchapter on "Website Design."

Disappointing too, and jarring, is the contradiction between the purportedly sunny and forward-thinking aim of this book to serve as a "roadmap" for "transformational librarianship" (p. 1) and the glum subtext that throughout the book warns us that the best reason for developing skills is to dodge the bullet of being deemed expendable come budget time. This writing at cross purposes is perhaps why the book falls short of its initial promise of energy and originality. Not only does phrasing and advice occasionally sound out of touch (for instance "original cataloguing" is rebranded "21st Century Cataloguing" (p. 58) and the reader is advised to write a handwritten letter the evening following an interview), but there are also newer and (or) emerging areas of library and information work such as assessment, campus copyright management, digital humanities, text mining, and data management that receive little or no mention. Simple technical details also mar the presentation of this book, with awkward typesetting and images that appear to be afterthoughts.

Still, it seems churlish to criticize such a well-intentioned book, when there is certainly a need for an accessible guide on the diversity of skills and competencies necessary for library and information work in the current economy. Although the book would have benefitted from much tighter editing, and most seasoned librarians will probably be familiar with what is presented, this title is recommended for early career professionals and students. The further reading section that accompanies each skill summary would be well worth exploring further. A companion website to the book is available at: <http://www.librarianskillbook.com/>.

Teresa Lee

Knowledge Manager

International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)

150 cours Albert Thomas

69372 Lyon Cedex 08, France

Email: leet@iarc.fr