

BOOK REVIEW / CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

Hough, B. **Crash course in time management for library staff**. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited; 2018. Softcover: 99 p. ISBN 978-1-4408-5067-7. Price: \$45 USD. Available from: <https://www.abc-clio.com/ABC-CLIOCorporate/product.aspx?pc=A5200P>

“... it’s a terrible thing, I think, in life to wait until you’re ready. I have this feeling now that actually no one is ever ready to do anything. There’s almost no such thing as ready. There’s only now. And you may as well do it now.”

<https://www.timeout.com/newyork/music/hugh-laurie-sings-the-blues>

Brenda Hough is a librarian with over 20 years of experience working in and with libraries. She has taught courses and given numerous presentations on time management at workshops and conferences. Hough defines time management as being “about planning and organizing how you spend your time.” In her book, she thoughtfully introduces the concept of time management and some of the tools that library staff can use to set and achieve goals.

This book is part of the Libraries Unlimited *Crash Course* series and is composed of 10 chapters. In the first chapter, Hough discusses time management as a method of not only organizing your time, but also of managing your energy, so that you focus on what’s really important to you. I found this to be a refreshingly holistic approach to looking at this concept, because how you manage your time impacts both your professional and personal life.

However, in order to manage your time, you must be open to change. For example, some of the strategies that Hough recommends may not reconcile with how you were raised to view time. Every culture has a different perception of time orientation; to some, it is linear and must be used wisely (monochronic); to others, it is fluid and can easily be postponed in favour of other things (polychronic).

In the second and third chapters, the author encourages readers to track how they spend their time. This exercise is meant to help you identify what you

actually accomplish throughout the day. It also helps you to recognize when your energy is at its best so that you can work on important tasks when your focus is greater. Hough also provides an overview of setting goals for both your personal and professional life and breaks them up into “well-being categories.” In so doing, Hough cleverly demonstrates why time management and goal setting go hand in hand. One cannot operate without the other.

In the remaining chapters, Hough reviews helpful strategies and tools to manage time and overcome barriers to productivity. For instance, we are all familiar with the “to-do list,” a list of things that we hope to get done. She introduces the “not to-do list”, a list of things that we can stop doing to become more efficient. For example, if you automatically check your email when you hear the notifications, you can turn them off so that you check your email only at dedicated times. If you have difficulty getting started on a project, you can set a timer and dedicate 15 minutes to work on it. If the timer goes off and you want to keep working, you can keep going. As I was reading this book, I recognized many of the techniques that Hough presented, but for which I had never known the term. The latter strategy is a variation of timeboxing, in which you set aside time to work on a task in time blocks.

Generally, I found this to be a carefully written book. It provides a good overview of time management principles and basic strategies. As a time management enthusiast, I found that the book consolidated many of the tactics that I had learned from past workshops and courses into a single resource. I appreciated Hough’s efforts to make her work more relevant to library staff by interspersing the content with real world examples of strategies she has used in her work with libraries, such as planning for the common distractions and interruptions that tend to occur in library environments.

I also learned some new tips and insights, such as overcoming my desire for perfection and the things I do to procrastinate.

A valuable feature of the book is the “Key Takeaways” section; at the end of every chapter, main

points are summarized. This element is common to the titles in the *Crash Course* series. The book also contains worksheets that facilitate the completion of the tasks that Hough discusses.

Throughout the book, Hough introduces readers to traditional and digital tools to track time, create lists and work collaboratively. Some of the online tools that the author discusses may not work in a hospital setting as they require downloads or must be purchased, and so their use may not be permitted by hospital IT departments. That said, some of the tools can be used for personal purposes.

Statement of Competing Interests

No competing interests declared.

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One weakness of the book is that there was no summary of all the tools that were covered. After my initial reading, I found myself going through the book to create this list.

On the whole, I found this to be an informative resource on time management for library staff. The examples given provide a meaningful context for readers working in libraries, including specialized health libraries. And while many of the ideas that Hough presents may not be new to readers already familiar with the concept, the book provides a great overview of time management ideas and tools.