

PARTNERSHIP

The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research
Revue canadienne de la pratique et de la recherche en bibliothéconomie et sciences de l'information

vol. 12, no. 2 (2017)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21083/partnership.v12i2.4156>

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Spencer L.G., Vandecreek, L., & Wright, H. S. (Eds.). (2015). **The Psychology of Librarianship**. Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press.

This book, according to its introduction, “is an attempt to raise awareness of the vast and neglected element of our work and start a conversation about it” (p. 4). In fact, a search in WorldCat on the subject of Librarians—Psychology retrieves this title and slightly over 300 more, some dating back to the 1930s, including such classics as Randolph Greenfield Adam’s 1937 *Librarians as enemies of books*, and the far more popular title, at least judging by the number of holding libraries, Michael Pope’s *Sex and the undecided librarian: A study of librarians' opinions on sexually oriented literature* (1974).

The current title doesn’t delve into either of the above topics, nor does it include a chapter on librarians who support the various programs of university psychology departments. Instead it is divided into four parts: Part 1, Librarians and Identity; Part 2, Librarians at Work; Part 3, Librarians, Libraries, and Users; and Part 4, Moving Forward: Action and Awareness. Each part contains 3 or 4 chapters, and the complete table of contents may be [viewed here](#).

Although the introduction does not suggest this, the subject matter of a number of these chapters is covered in existing books. For example, Ellen Symons’ chapter, “Have we come a long way? Librarian stereotypes and self-image into the 21st century,” is paralleled by a book published a year earlier that is not included in Symons’ list of references: Nicole Pagowsky and Miriam Rigby’s *The Librarian Stereotype: Deconstructing Perceptions and Presentations of Information Work*.

One of the most intriguing essays in this collection is Barbara E. Weeg’s “Flow in librarianship: An exploration of employee motivation.” The author herself is well qualified to write the chapter, having an undergraduate degree in Psychology “with distinction” as well as a couple of master’s degrees—but the topic? Flow turns out to be “a positive psychological state first elucidated by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in 1975” (p. 124). Weeg’s big complaint seems to be that hardly any authors of 23 library science texts she analyzed mention flow in connection with employee motivation (p. 137), and amidst [unnumbered] library science journal articles she analyzed “only 4 were by

authors who applied Csikszentmihalyi's flow principles to librarianship" (p. 140). Her challenge to librarians is "to look beyond library science literature to the literatures of positive psychology and management for theory and research on strengths-based individual and organizational development" (p. 148). I was aware of the literature on flow in sports¹—some call it a natural "high" while others refer to it as being "in the zone." Weeg convinced me that there is no reason why the concept couldn't be applied to library work.

Like Weeg's, all chapters in this book are well researched, well documented and, for the most part, well written. One of the best, and a good representative of the whole collection, is "The current cataloging landscape: A therapist's perspective" by Joan E. Schuitema. In addition to her degree in library science, Schuitema holds an MA in pastoral counselling—through this lens she examines how cataloguing staff can successfully navigate their way through the many new and traumatic developments that currently confront them. She concludes that "[w]ith the additional effort of intentionally working through the trauma and adjustment disorder the profession is facing, assisted by the tools a therapist can provide, progress will likely exceed even the most optimistic expectations" (p. 344). The tools Schuitema references include, among others, normalization, reframing, reducing a stressor, and, yes, grief work. (I am glad I am not a cataloguer).

Like Schuitema, most authors have years of experience in the profession, and while all but one are American, the exception (Canadian Ellen Symons, currently the Electronic Resources and Serials Librarian at Queen's University) is the author of the catchy first chapter. The editors themselves are equally qualified. Lynn Gullickson Spencer, also the author of the second chapter on Myers-Briggs, is a music cataloger and also a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor; Leanne VandeCreek has been the Psychology Reference Librarian at Northern Illinois University since 2000. Prior to receiving her MSLIS she earned an MSW and was a practicing Clinical Social Worker for six years. The third editor, H. Stephen Wright, is an Emeritus Professor at Northern Illinois University (retired 2012), former Catalog Librarian at NIU, and author of several other publications.

In sum, this is a uniformly first-rate collection worth considering as a purchase. Even though there are existing books on many of the subjects covered by each chapter, the fact remains that the book as a whole provides a current and comprehensive overview of the various aspects of the psychology of librarianship. After reading this book one will probably emerge with a greater sensitivity to the role psychology has in our profession. Who knows—some readers might be inspired to order other titles on the subject of Librarians—Psychology such as *The Alienated Librarian* by Marcia J. Nauratil (1989) or maybe my personal favourite, *Highways, Buildings and Mountains: Driving my Way Through a Sabbatical* by Robert Genovese (2002).

¹ See for example Jackson, S. A., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1999). *Flow in sports*. Windsor, ON: Human Kinetics.

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