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Book Review: David W. Lewis. Reimagining the Academic Library. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.

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Book Reviews



David W. Lewis. *Reimagining the Academic Library*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. 192p. Paper, \$40 (ISBN 978-1-4422-3858-9).

Reimagining the Academic Library provides both a succinct overview of the external forces that have been driving change in academic libraries for more than the past two decades as well as proposed steps academic library leaders and librarians should take to address these forces and help complete the transition to a relevant, digital 21st-century academic library. David W. Lewis, current dean of the Indiana-Purdue University Indianapolis University Library, has shared his visionary views on how collections and services are changing and has offered directions academic librarians should move in previously published articles and book chapters. The value of this work is that he presents both historical context and a roadmap for change in a single volume. In this very easy-to-read volume, Lewis articulates exactly why the changes he promotes make sense based on the historical context for the disruption we have all been experiencing as well as ongoing technological changes.

In *Reimagining the Academic Library*, Lewis divides his work into several parts. Part One focuses on the various forces, or disruptive changes, that academic librarians have been trying to address for the past two decades. Part Two includes a series of proposals for steps academic librarians should take in response to these disruptions. His conclusion is a list of “Ten Things to Do Now.” Every academic library will have members who have different levels of comfort with change, but one of the strengths of this book is that, in presenting short summaries of the various forces that have been impacting academic libraries, Lewis provides historical background and context for librarians who may not be as familiar with how the economic factors in scholarly communication and how the transition to digital content is changing our collections. By including the historical context, readers will be able to better understand his basic core principle that our role is changing from one of building print collections to one of enabling and preserving scholarship created in and by our academic institutions and making that scholarship available to the world.

To better understand his support for knowledge creation, there are two key chapters in this work that are worth pointing out. “Force Five: The Economics of Information” gives us, in fifteen pages, an excellent summary of the economic factors that are driving changes in how collections are managed in academic libraries. It is also highly recommended as a chapter to share as broadly as possible in academic institutions with administrators and faculty who are too young to know the years of changes and the forces that have been in play during the years of decreasing budgets.

A second chapter worth highlighting is “Step One: Defining the Job.” As our collections and services change, our job roles also need to change. In this chapter, Lewis challenges librarians to identify value by finding those functions that they can do that cannot be done by others. Lewis stipulates in this work that the three core services that librarians have always provided — keeping certain documents “for the long haul,” collecting “knowledge and information” that our funding institutions need, and assisting our community members in finding and using the information they need — will continue in libraries in the future. However, in addition to these core services, Lewis advocates that, in a digital environment, we must move to focus on content creation services and spaces and focus on creating more open access content. Thus with these new services is the need to focus on how our job roles will change.

Lewis focuses on forces that have caused disruptive change in libraries, but early on he advises academic librarians to “find opportunities to be the disrupter who develops new services and products that use the available technologies with new business models.” In discussing how the physical book is changing, he compares it to the changes the music industry has already undergone. In looking at changes in the scholarly record, Lewis rightly points out concerns about lost information. Digital preservation is one of the challenges every library needs to address; and, collectively, we need to find solutions on preserving content more quickly. How we adapt and thrive when conditions are likely to continue to change presents us with both challenges and opportunities.

In his conclusion, Lewis outlines the ten steps that are necessary for effective change in academic libraries. It is perhaps the 10th step, “Sell the Change,” that may be the most challenging because Lewis correctly asserts that we need to articulate why new investments are needed to our administrators even as we see expenditures in other more traditional areas reduced. It is perhaps worth considering that, not only should this work be required reading for students in library and information management programs, but also for members of campus library advisory committees to help them obtain a better picture of the outside forces that we have been dealing with and the forces of change that require investment in our libraries for the future.

Our future in higher education is dependent on responding to disruptive forces with positive change; some of the proposals will mean making hard decisions and tough choices. However, academic libraries are not only often the heart of the institution, they are essential for supporting higher education. This work has many practical suggestions for librarians who wish to make change and ensure that we remain relevant on our campuses. In view of recent events, our libraries may become even more important on each of our campuses as pointed out by Chris Bourq, head of MIT libraries, who recently shared in an Educause talk on libraries and our role in higher education, that we may not need to save libraries, but libraries may indeed be what saves us. David W. Lewis provides a framework for ensuring that our libraries are relevant and continue to contribute in the 21st century and make a difference for higher education by doing those things others on campus cannot, emphasizing that we must look closely at those things that need doing versus continuing to do what has been traditional. It is a thoughtful and inspiring book that is well worth the time to read for oneself as well as to read with others in your organization for discussion and conversation about what strategies make sense for your own institution. Everyone may not agree with all the proposals, yet David Lewis has produced a work that will inform librarians, and only by engaging in conversations about possible directions that will work within your culture, your campus, and your type of academic library will you find a path for relevance and success at your own institution. I believe this book should be required reading for all students in library or information management schools interested in working in academic libraries. —Teresa A. Fishel, *Macalester College*

R. David Lankes (with contributions from Wendy Newman, Sue Kowalski, Beck Tench, and Cheryl Gould). *The New Librarianship Field Guide*. Cambridge, Mass.; London, England: MIT Press, 2016. 226p. Paper, \$22 (ISBN 978262529082). LC 2015-39943.

R. David Lankes, celebrated author/editor of *The Atlas of New Librarianship* (2011) has now published a new book, also from MIT Press, as a companion to the *Atlas*. Its purpose is to serve as a handbook for implementing the ideas promoted in the *Atlas*. At the time of publication, Lankes was Professor and Dean's Scholar for the New Librarianship at Syracuse University's School of Information Studies and Director of the Information Institute of Syracuse. Subsequently, Lankes has assumed the position of director of the University of South Carolina's School of Library & Information Science