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Book Review: Transforming Print: Collection Development and Management for Our Connected Future

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Book Reviews

Elyssa M. Gould

Transforming Print: Collection Development and Management for Our Connected Future. Eds. Lorrie McAllister and Shari Laster in collaboration with Core Publishing. Chicago: ALA Editions, 2021. 139 p. \$59.99 softcover (ISBN 978-0-8389-4882-8).

This book provides an interesting and insightful look at the broad cross-section of print collections with digital surrogates, and supplies many good reasons why print is still valuable even with the proliferation of digital options. I would like to begin my review by taking a cue from chapter 3 (“Working Toward Human-Centered, Reparative Change”): I am a white, cisgender, able-bodied woman, and a library administrator. As the authors of that chapter state, it is important to take note of how the authors’ “identities shape this work, but also how yours informs your understanding of” (34) the work. Within that context, I found this book to provide useful examples of how print materials can be instrumental in “equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice (EDISJ)” (118) work within libraries.

The book is divided into three sections: “Contemporary Collection Development,” “Collections Access and Management,” and “Centering the User.” While the sections do have different focuses, there is definite overlap in the topics between the sections in a way that centers the user throughout the process of collection development, access, management, and utilization. Within the sections, the editors have compiled a unique collection of articles that address a diversity of topics such as: how to collaborate with local Native American communities by soliciting their input into collection decisions, why print collecting is important for small publisher output in Latin American and Caribbean Studies, how shared collection development is currently working in various consortia and how it can be improved through digitization efforts, and the importance of the physicality of print resources to users on multiple levels.

The chapter authors represent institutions ranging from a small college to the Library of Congress (LC), as well as including those working with the HathiTrust and a consortium of Federal Depositories. The authors also represent an incredible breadth of experience and knowledge, and together they present a unified message about the need for libraries to serve the function of promoting equity and amplifying the voices of the “local” community, be that the surrounding citizenry, student population, faculty researchers, or the United States writ large. The example collections

are also wide-ranging. Whether speaking of an archive highlighting Native American oral histories and artifacts or preserving a collection of indie tarot cards, the materials are used for teaching, research, and outreach. The wealth of collections presented, whether it is the huge collections of the HathiTrust or LC or the small “Model Research Collection” (97) remind us that librarians can promote our professional expertise while also highlighting the utility of our resources.

Each of the chapters within the book present conceptual and practical knowledge that would be useful for any library practitioner. The practical advice ranges from how to ensure the collection of materials from small publishers that might otherwise be absent, even from large consortium holdings, to browsing habits of faculty members in library stacks and how to enhance those stacks to include references to online resources. Several chapters speak of the importance of collection development at scale, whether speaking of collecting across a consortium or more globally as the HathiTrust and LC try to do. Expanding the idea of the collection to include other libraries is key to documenting the historical record as the publishing output continues to grow at a phenomenal rate. The authors of the LC chapter, for example, discuss scoping their work based on items that are not widely available elsewhere, and expound on the intellectual work that entails.

The authors point out again and again the interconnectedness of the print realm and the digital. It is clear from these examples that both serve valuable functions and are not simply replacements for each other. They also put out a call for librarians to expand the definition of who the contributors to library collections should be. Expanding library collections to include more voices of the people who are underrepresented in current collections, more foreign language materials, and more materials that appeal to visual and tactile learners are all presented in this volume. “Our Connected Future” comes at the end of the title, but the work itself speaks to that connection throughout, presenting an inspiring message of a future connected first and foremost between people.—*Debra Andreadis (andreadis@denison.edu), Denison University Libraries*