
WEBB, J., GANNON-LEARY, P. and BENT, M. *Providing effective library services for research*. London: Facet Publishing. 2007. 278 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1-85604-589-6. £39.95.

Written for a readership of ‘newly qualified and practising liaison and research support librarians’ (p.1), this book combines ‘practical advice with an exploration of fundamental issues relating to the relationship between research and libraries’ (back cover notes). It is both grounded in theory and full of practical ideas for everyday use.

Of the nine chapters, four contextualise research support (‘some perspectives’, ‘current challenges’, ‘defining research’ and ‘facing the future’), one chapter outlines key principles for supporting research, and the remaining four chapters deal with the nitty-gritty of doing the job (‘collection management’, ‘researcher’s toolkit’, ‘services to facilitate research’ and ‘the information literate researcher’). A very extensive bibliography, several pages of research-relevant websites, a useful list of acronyms and abbreviations, and a glossary complete the work.

The greatest strength of this book is its sheer practicality. It is full of great ideas and resources for supporting researchers. There are detailed case studies, such as the research training programme at De Montfort University (pp.164-170), that the reader can easily imagine using in their own institution; as well as numerous lists of questions, suggestions and ideas to help clarify one’s thoughts. Marketing the research library (p.190), finding journal information (p.103), evaluating Google Scholar (p.19) and principles for researcher training (p.179) exemplify the range of topics covered. Whether it is a web site or a new resource that sparks your interest and has you reaching for your keyboard, there is something here for everyone.

Importantly, the authors do not make the mistake of assuming that ‘one size fits all’. They emphasise that researchers, and their needs, are highly varied. Full time or part time, scientist or artist, early career or highly experienced – individuals have differing needs and it is necessary that librarians should know and understand these before they can effectively meet them. The message is clear: know your user. The four key chapters in this book all set the scene with an assessment of users’ needs before addressing their subject in depth. In both their practice, and in gathering material for this book, the authors have gone to great lengths to solicit and take on board on the views of practising researchers. Quotations from researchers at all levels feature throughout the book.

There are a few omissions from this book. In focusing on UK academic libraries, the authors fail to fully consider the needs of researchers in non-university environments. For example, there is little discussion of ‘third strand’ research, or of the research needs of users of museums and archives. I would have liked to read more about physical research spaces – the authors touch on this in a couple of places, but a case study or two from this rapidly developing area would have been both interesting and useful. Some further discussion of information-seeking behaviour of researchers in different disciplines might have led to greater

understanding of their motivations and increased the relevance of the book to the many subject librarians that support researchers as part of their portfolios. Finally, given the enormous bibliography, some scene-setting in the form of a literature review might have been reasonable. This might also have explored further the theory behind the practice.

Overall, the authors' extensive experience of academic librarianship and expertise in learning and teaching (Webb and Bent are both National Teaching Fellows) qualify them to write authoritatively on this subject. With the evidence they offer from their own institutions, the book has a validity that both convinces and inspires the reader. As a practical handbook for librarians responsible for supporting researchers, this book should be required reading. I strongly recommend it.

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