



PROJECT MUSE®

The Accidental Health Sciences Librarian (review)

Jackie MacDonald

Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science, Volume 35,
Number 4, December / décembre 2011, pp. 453-454 (Review)

Published by University of Toronto Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/ils.2011.0028>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/456408>

policy for fear of appearing partisan, but he challenges this position, writing that “archives need to be careful and fair in their analyses, not passive in the guise of neutrality.” Robert Steiner closes the volume with a forward-looking argument that archivists are uniquely suited to confront the “literal disintegration of meaning in political communications and in journalism.”

The collection is clearly wide reaching in its assessment of contemporary archives. But readers hoping to use the volume for quick access to information on specific topics will be pleased to find a well-constructed 12-page index. Given that there has been an increasing emphasis on transparency and accountability in government and public institutions and a rapidly changing information environment, *Better off Forgetting?* is a timely addition to contemporary debates about Canadian public policy. Readers who are familiar with archives but not with public policy, accountability, and collective memory may regret that the compilation lacks an introduction to the key terms and concepts that bind the essays together. But anyone searching for literature that situates archives squarely in the realm of public affairs and collective memory will be well served by this volume of essays.

Creighton Barrett, archives specialist, Dalhousie University Archives and Special Collections; part-time instructor, School of Information Management, Dalhousie University.

Lisa A. Ennis and Nicole Mitchell. *The Accidental Health Sciences Librarian*. Medford, NJ: Information Today, 2010. ISBN 978-1-57387-395-6. CAN\$29.50.

Lisa A. Ennis and Nicole Mitchell are librarians at the University of Alabama at Birmingham's Lister Hill Library of Health Sciences. Lisa, author of several books and numerous articles, including Emerald's 12-part Marketing Your Library series, received her MSc in information sciences from the University of Tennessee in 1997 and has worked in health-related settings since then. Nicole is a 2006 MLIS graduate of the University of Alabama. Together they represent perspectives of both the novice and expert—a winning combination. The *Accidental Health Sciences Librarian* is a recent addition to Information Today's Accidental series.

This book provides sound information and great advice for information professionals considering a career in health care services. It will also be useful to consultants or publisher/vendor customer-services representatives who deliver services to healthcare settings. The book will have particular value to the library-and-information-science student or graduate program applicant considering health sciences librarianship as a career.

The writing style is clear and the language is plain. The authors' choice of resources for discussion is appropriate for a book of this size. They provide details on leading databases, including Medline, the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature, and the Cochrane Library, as well as examples of others in several categories. Of all of these, I question only the inclusion of

UptoDate, a point-of-care resource, and the absence of its competitor Dynamed, which is my preference between the two and is currently provided to Canadian nurses and physicians by their national professional associations. My experience has always been that UptoDate markets aggressively directly to clinicians; as a health sciences librarian, I have never felt part of its target market.

Yet there is only so much that can be managed in a single book. The authors note that their book is just a starting point; it does not cover everything about health sciences librarianship. This book's emphasis is on providing traditional public services to clinicians who work within a medical model, which is just one of many groups a health sciences librarian might serve and just one of many roles for information professionals in health settings. Many of us who have worked both in academic health sciences libraries and health care services libraries find great differences between the needs of academics and the needs of practising professionals. The section on resources for "point of need" was confusing to me because it did not seem to differentiate between these two very distinct sets of information needs. I would like to see mention of health sciences librarians embedded in office settings and more on engaging with clients to assess information needs of different groups because I believe this is one of the two most important things we can do. The other is to make sure librarians' information management skills are used and valued beyond the walls of the traditional health sciences library.

These are not shortcomings; this is a slim book, a "good book," well worth \$29.50. It introduces and covers the subject it sets out to address. Certainly, we can use more like it.

Jackie MacDonald, tri-District Manager, Library and Knowledge Management Services, Annapolis Valley Health, South Shore Health, South West Health, and Dalhousie School of Nursing, Yarmouth Site; Adjunct Professor, Dalhousie School of Information Management.