



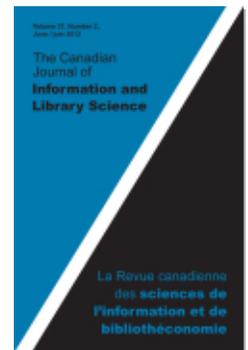
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The Embedded Librarian: Innovative Strategies for Taking Knowledge Where it's Needed by David Shumaker (review)

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Reviews

Comptes rendus

David Shumaker. *The Embedded Librarian: Innovative Strategies for Taking Knowledge Where it's Needed*. Medford, NJ: Information Today, 2012. 212 pages. ISBN 978-1-57387-452-6. US\$49.50.

In *The Embedded Librarian*, Catholic University's David Shumaker offers a portrait of embedded librarianship, documents the trend toward increasingly embedded practice, and provides practical tools for supporting such a model in a variety of library settings. Drawing on an extensive literature review as well as his own research, Shumaker provides an accessible entry-point into embedded librarianship.

Fully half the content of the book is a thorough and well-organized review of literature on embedded librarianship, which synthesizes major reports on the phenomenon as well as scattered articles from across subdisciplines. In its coverage of the three major genres of embedded librarianship (academic, special/corporate, and medical) and its attempt to address elements of embeddedness within other settings (public and school librarianship), this review is particularly strong in the area of corporate librarianship, where there have been no previous comprehensive reviews.

The text is rich with diverse examples of embedded librarianship and provides simple but effective quantitative rubrics for assessing one's degree of embeddedness as well as the readiness of the individual, library, and overarching organization for increasing levels of embedded librarianship. These tools are followed with tips on how to progress toward greater embeddedness. The final section focuses on evaluation of embedded librarianship programs; while this chapter is not as complete as the planning sections, it acknowledges the importance of integrated evaluation and does provide examples of possible approaches.

As is common in Information Today publications, this book contains an unacknowledged focus on the United States; there are only three references to Canadian content within the book (one of which has an error in it) and very few examples from farther abroad. This is especially unfortunate in the teacher-librarian section, where an examination of regional differences in qualifications could be enlightening. A greater weakness, however, is the second chapter's justification for the inevitability of a move to embedded librarianship—a somewhat unconvincing argument that is supported more by reliance on management gurus and pop psychology than evidence from librarianship, and which may

ruffle the feathers of non-embedded librarians who are evolving in different ways that may well fit their user groups or unique environments. The need to accept the primary assertion that one *should* necessarily be moving on a path toward increased embeddedness—on mediocre evidence—weakens the self-assessment tools somewhat, as there is no place for those who may be appropriately non-embedded.

Throughout, there is a tension between identifying librarians as library-affiliated and deconstructing that notion. While Shumaker proposes attributes of embedded librarians, he does not touch on the definition of a librarian, leaving readers to grapple with the ongoing question of whether the embedded librarian is “the new librarian” or a hybrid of librarian plus another domain. Related to this unresolved issue, the coverage of research-embedded roles (e.g., in academia and health) is light, although there are undoubtedly a large number of “undercover” librarians in such positions, whose experiences may not be reflected in the extant literature. Finally, the issue of financing of embedded librarian jobs is not fully explored. I suspect that many librarians may indeed wish to provide intensive, individualized service to a close network of colleagues but lack concrete models for how to successfully obtain partner fiscal buy-in.

The author, himself a longtime (now-former) embedded librarian, co-led a Special Libraries Association-funded investigation of embedded librarianship and has been blogging his research journey on a plain WordPress website at www.embeddedlibrarian.com for several years now. The production quality of the book is generally good, with adequate indexing and an organizational structure that flows well. Overall, *The Embedded Librarian* is a useful and timely book that documents a current trend in librarianship and highlights opportunities for research and practice. It is a must-read for special librarians, a good read for health and academic librarians (especially managers), and may also be of interest to master of library and information science students and librarians from other sectors.

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Robin Neidorf. *Teach Beyond Your Reach: An Instructor's Guide to Developing and Running Successful Distance Learning Classes, Workshops, Training Sessions, and More*. Second edition. Medford, NJ: Information Today, 2012. 214 pages. ISBN 978-1-937290-01-6. US\$29.95/CAN\$32.95.

Distance education exists in a wide variety of options, including correspondence classes, Web-based versions of credit classes, massive open online courses, webinars, virtual teams, and self-paced activities or training modules. Sometimes these options are stand-alone and sometimes they are included as components of on-site classes to create blended learning. The range of possibilities is bewildering, and too often instructors attempt to translate face-to-face classes or