Apps for Librarians

Nicole Hennig. *Apps for Librarians: Using the Best Mobile Technology to Educate, Create, and Engage*. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2014. 197 pp. $45.00. Paperback. ISBN: 9781610695305.

Nicole Hennig's book *Apps for Librarians* focuses on apps for mobile devices that are most useful for librarians in their day-to-day work. The book begins with a brief chapter on the usefulness of mobile technology generally, while Chapter 2 through Chapter 12 are organized around apps that perform a particular task or interact with a particular type of content. This categorization of apps includes apps librarians might use in the course of their professional work, as well as apps that librarians might recommend to patrons. The information about the apps is presented as reviews, though the author focuses almost exclusively on apps that she can recommend positively. The review format supports Hennig's purpose of providing apps that librarians can recommend to patrons, and she also intends the reviews to be helpful for librarians seeking to provide workshops on mobile devices and their uses. The outline for reviews that the author follows includes both descriptive and evaluative information, such as a technical description, usage examples, and the suggested audience for the app. This outline is explained in more detail in a checklist in Chapter 13, and includes further evaluative criteria such as accessibility features, customization options, and how the app takes advantage of the mobile platform.

The lists of apps in each chapter are by no means exhaustive, but they provide a sufficient number of apps to acquaint the reader with the possible utility of the apps within the different categories. Highlighting a selective group of apps is helpful for categories that might have an overwhelming number of choices in the marketplace, such as the apps for reading included in Chapter 2. This chapter includes apps for individual readers, as well as apps for library services; these choices support the author's intention of encouraging librarians to advise patrons on the use of apps and to use apps themselves to support the library's mission. Besides highlighting a careful selection of apps to recommend in each chapter, the author also offers several other apps worth trying, which don't receive a full review. For instance, in Chapter 8, apps for communication, the author reviews Skype, Hangouts, Imo, and WhatsApp, while VSee, Google Voice, and GroupMe receive a mention, but no review. A list of apps at the end of the book specifies which apps receive full reviews and notes others that fall in the "worth trying" category.

While Hennig has divided apps into various categories according to task, some of the types of apps seem most relevant to librarians managing their own professional work, some could be more useful in providing services to patrons, and some would be most useful for patrons using their own mobile devices. Some chapters, like Chapter 3, apps for productivity, and Chapter 12, apps for professional development, offer examples of apps related to working life that seem like particularly good candidates for a careers workshop. The author is good at identifying particular use cases, whether for end-users or librarians. Hennig reminds librarians that apps can be particularly useful for roving reference, and she also points out apps that are useful for marketing library services. The chapter on apps for reading also includes a few books as apps that could be pre-loaded on a circulating iPad. A chapter on apps for special collections shows examples of apps libraries have created to share their unique materials in an electronic and interactive format.

Other useful apps fall into categories associated with topics covered by traditional library materials, like the apps for research and reference in Chapter 4, which include ready-reference material like maps and dictionaries. Some of the apps Hennig recommends support content creation in ways that traditional library services cannot. Apps for taking notes and writing in Chapter 5, for instance, could incorporate library electronic resources, but only if these resources could be copied and used within an app. The apps for multimedia that are reviewed support creativity in visual and musical arts, as well as learning from and enjoying audio and video recordings online. Even with apps that are primarily for end-users, Hennig believes that librarians should take every opportunity to educate patrons about the possibilities for learning new

things using mobile technology, and that librarians can find new ways to advise patrons on how to do research by taking advantage of mobile apps.

The author has a good eye for summarizing the salient features of well-known apps, while also introducing other useful apps in that particular category. In all of the reviews, Hennig is attentive to accessibility for all users, and in the first chapter she focuses particularly on equitable access to technology and information. Each chapter features a good balance of familiar and new apps; a total of 112 apps are reviewed, and some additional apps are provided as alternatives. The book includes a bibliography of sources for app reviews as well as books and articles for further reading.

Hennig reviews apps that follow the themes of her subtitle well; that is, librarians can engage more fully with their community by educating patrons about creative ways to use apps as they seek to learn, perform research, and manage their work and home life more effectively. This book would be useful for librarians who want an overview of specific apps they could use in the course of advising patrons about apps and teaching workshops about apps and mobile devices. There is a wide enough variety of apps that both academic librarians and public librarians who work with school-age children through adults would find individual apps to recommend to patrons or to use themselves. School librarians who work with older children could find relevant apps in this book, but since only a couple of the apps reviewed specifically mention children under the age of twelve, school librarians might be looking for apps that were geared toward a younger audience.

While information on specific apps will become dated in a short time, I would recommend this book for purchase because it focuses on particular categories of apps that librarians should be comfortable using and recommending, presents a helpful rubric for evaluating apps, and serves as a good source of ideas for library programming opportunities that incorporate apps for mobile devices.

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