Innovation and Experiential Learning in an Academic Library: Meeting the Needs of Today's Students

Sarah Nagle & Elías Tzoc, Editors. *Innovation and Experiential Learning in an Academic Library*: *Meeting the Needs of Today's Students*. London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022. 222pp. $75. Paperback. 978153815184.

How do libraries continue to remain relevant in times of ever-changing technological advances? Should libraries "jump on the bandwagon" for every new technology that develops? How do libraries continue to adapt to changing times (or global pandemics) in ways that ensure they are still meeting the needs of their communities? Can leadership inspire innovation? What is innovation? How can librarians, maker space staff, and other information workers ensure that their programs situate themselves in an ethos that allows for lifelong learning and continued relevance into the future? These are some of the questions that Sarah Nagle, Elías Tzoc, and others seek to answer as they provide articles, case studies, and examples of innovation and experiential learning in academic libraries.

Following a very brief introduction, the articles are divided into three sections: Innovation and Leadership, Examples and Case Studies, and Future Literacy Developments. The first three chapters (Innovation and Leadership) appear to serve as the more formal introduction, focusing on leadership, innovation, and experiential learning. In doing so, Tzoc, Kim, Holthe, and See challenge ideas of innovation and present questions to ask as readers progress through the rest of the book.

To begin, Elías Tzoc, in his chapter "Planning, Advocating, and Fostering Creativity and Innovation," argues that even during times of "unprecedented change" (3), libraries must look for ways to increase innovation and provide new ways of learning, which sets the scene for the chapters to follow. Tzoc provides many good leadership takeaways, such as learning to cultivate a culture of experimentation versus perfectionism and the need to solicit input from a variety of stakeholders. Tzoc's challenges for the reader to consider (such as questioning what types of services will be "effective, impactful, and equitable" [13] or the challenge to transform fear into engagement) are evident throughout the following chapter.

Continuing in "Leadership for Innovation," Bohun Kim retains the focus on connections between leadership and innovation, focusing more on innovation. Kim calls readers to challenge their assumptions, reminding them of three important principles that can be used to evaluate the following case studies: using technology is not equivalent to innovation; novelty is not necessarily synonymous with innovation; and that disruptive does not mean innovative. Kim argues that innovation requires creative ideas and buy-in to be successful.

Finally, Chris Holthe and Andrew See, in "Bringing Experiential Learning to Campus," present an introduction to experiential learning and library programming. Following a (very) brief overview of experiential learning theory (ELT) and Kolb's theory, Holthe and See discuss the application and benefits of ELT, using the Northern Arizona University Cline Library as an example. The chapter includes many practical considerations, such as device passwords and account tracking.

In part two, readers see concrete examples of innovation and experiential learning in mid to large-sized academic libraries across the United States. Programs and projects include the Experiential Studio at Brigham Young University, Zine workshops at Miami University, CURE-based projects at the University of Northern Iowa, a 3D scanning lab at the University of Oklahoma, 3D printing services at Harvard's Cabot Science Library, and UC Berkley's barrier-free makerspace.

The project maturities range from pilot projects to established programs. The authors represent a range of frontline staff, managing librarians and directors, professors, and more senior library administrators connected to the projects and programs, providing well-rounded perspectives. While perhaps not explicitly, each example provides evidence of its innovation and creativity through a discussion of the need the project or program seeks to meet. Each case study or example includes background information on the project, assessment methods, challenges, recommendations, future opportunities, partnerships, and scaling-up opportunities. For many projects, authors have included COVID-19 considerations, both during the initial pandemic and after programs restart or pivot. While each chapter provides exciting opportunities, readers should be aware that experiences may vary, especially for smaller libraries or solo librarian situations.

Part three, "Future Literacy Developments," provides a conclusion that looks to the future of innovation in libraries. Sarah Nagle's forward-thinking chapter, "Maker Literacy, Metaliteracy, and the ACRL Framework," is a thought-provoking exploration of the connections between maker literacy and metaliteracy while highlighting the continuing flexibility and adaptability of ACRL's information literacy framework to address new technologies and literacies. Using maker literacy's core concepts, Nagle provides an especially strong exploration of the ways these concepts intersect with metaliteracy and discusses how the intersections will help makerspaces remain relevant. Nagle's discussion of the liminality between known and unknown technologies becomes a challenge to librarians and library workers to embrace the uncertainty (such as ever-changing technology) and help students to do the same, to help create transferable skills and "lifelong dispositions" (161) that can be carried into the future.

Like Nagle, Kelsey Sheaffer et al. also challenge readers to think about the ethos of innovative projects into the future in their chapter "Off the Cutting Edge." Using five projects as examples, Sheaffer et al. encourage program stakeholders to centre innovation on people, not technology. The authors provide a wonderful complement to previous chapters' call for innovation to meet human needs as opposed to presenting technology for technology's sake. This chapter also serves as a "final" challenge and a reminder that "making technology available is not enough; new movements must train, support, and integrate people who teach and promote that technology" (173). The section finishes with Shu Wan's "Developing an Engati-Based Library Chatbot to Improve Reference Services," in which Wan provides a case for chatbots as an opportunity to provide innovative reference services in academic libraries.

Although full of inspiring examples and case studies, key takeaways, and challenges to consider, the essays in this book feel relatively disjointed. Series Editor Trudi Jacobson's foreword serves as a call to action and communal conversation regarding innovation, as Jacobson encourages readers to pick and choose chapters that appeal to them. While the chapters lend themselves to being read in isolation, as Jacobson suggests, the book would benefit from a more in-depth introduction. Jerome Conley's short introduction does serve to remind the reader to seek innovation and experiential learning to "empower discovery, creation, and success" (x) as part of the ethos of librarianship. A comprehensive introduction, however, could provide more explicit goals and provided more context to many of the theories (such as ELT) to supplement the chapter authors' overviews. The foreword and introduction also fail to frame the following chapters in a way that provides continuity or establishes relationships among the thoughts and threads woven throughout the articles.

In addition to a stronger introduction, the book would benefit from an alternate closing article. Wan's discussion provides a good argument for the innovative potential of chatbots in library services. It is also in line with the section theme "future literacy developments." However, its placement as the final chapter does not seem as successful as the essays of Nagle or Sheaffer et al. would

have been. These two essays focus more on the development of dispositions, both of the student and the library worker/program planner, that can carry innovation, creativity, and learning forward into the future, regardless of technology. Some momentum is lost by closing with an article on a specific technology (Engati-based chatbots).

Again, although the chapters are littered with practical advice, there were times when these insights were lost in the text or perhaps missed perspectives. For example, in Tzoc's chapter, some of the key leadership takeaways have the tendency to get lost in a rather clunky storytelling style. A stronger thesis and additional transitions between sections may have helped clarify Tzoc's points. In addition, most of the projects are situated in mid- to large-size academic libraries. The overall book could have benefited from a discussion of the challenges faced by the time and budget constraints of solo librarian (smaller institution) setups. While the chapters did a relatively good job of ensuring there was an overview of the theories and projects, there were times when the overview could have been a better grounding in theory or additional citations. For example, Holthe and See's chapter provided an overview, but readers may prefer more citations overall, if for nothing else than additional reading due to the brevity of Holthe and See's overview.

Overall, the authors were able to meet the (somewhat implicit) goals of the book, as they all sought to outline the ways in which innovation and experiential learning can serve to meet the new and ever-changing needs of today's students. The case studies and examples throughout serve as fodder for new ideas. As such, this book is inspiring for librarians, staff members, administrators, and others in mid to large academic settings who may be seeking new ideas, practical applications, or even inspiration to continue with their projects. While there are many takeaways for librarians and staff of smaller institutions, it may be a bit more difficult to achieve similar projects in their own libraries. No matter the library size, though, this book serves as a challenge to view innovation as more than just technology but also a human-centred endeavour.

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