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Review of the book Developing Readers' Advisory Services: Concepts and Commitments

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Fay Zipkowitz
Contributing Editor

Reviews

Developing Readers' Advisory Services: Concepts and Commitments

Ed. by Kathleen de la Peña McCook and Gary O. Rolstad. New York: Neal-Schuman, 1993. 117p., index, \$29.95 (ISBN 1-55570-163-9).

After a period when it was all but ignored, readers' advisory has once again entered the consciousness of library professionals in the past few years, prompting several articles and books. This collection of seventeen original essays synthesizes some of that literature and attempts to show librarians, library administrators, and library science educators the importance, even the necessity, of readers' advisory services.

As with any collection of essays, some are better than others. Of particular value are the chapters on multicultural issues, on providing readers' advisory services to persons with disabilities, to Native Americans, and to non-English speakers, and the essay on academic library browsing rooms. Those who believe in a broad definition of "readers' advisory" will be pleased at how several authors include outreach as part of its mission. Both the bibliographies included in the essays and the separate ones compiled by Dorothy J. White and Tosca O. Gonsalves provide

the reader with important suggestions for further research.

The authors provide overviews of the history and purpose of reading guidance services, defend it, discuss ways it has been done well, and how it could, and should, be used to assist special groups of library users. Gary O. Rolstad argues that readers' advisory training should be given to all public service staff members and uses as an example his experiences with willing-and-able support staff in Louisiana.

Many of the essays, although well written, are much too short. Some are no more than two or three pages and only scratch the surface of their respective topics. Nevertheless, the editors have compiled a valuable addition to the readers' advisory literature that should be consulted by library school faculty, who all too often ignore this subject, as well as by library professionals wishing to reexamine, expand, or improve this traditional public library service.—
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