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Deconstructing Service in Libraries: Intersections of Identities and Expectations (Book Review)

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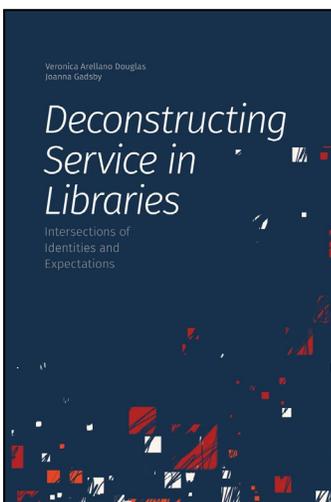
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make trauma-informed approaches to library services necessary, and more. Part II addresses six key principles of trauma-informed care: safety; transparency and trustworthiness; peer support; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment, voice, and choice; and cultural, historical, and gender issues. Part III discusses assessing organizational readiness, the library as sanctuary, becoming a trauma-informed library workforce, planning for trauma-informed services. The book interweaves the importance of adopting cultural humility and unlearning myths, misinformation, and disinformation about underrepresented and oppressed groups. In librarianship, retraumatization can occur due to policies and procedures, in-person and online interactions, engaging with the library catalog subject headings, and more. The responsibility for knowing and rectifying this is necessary. To do so is to engage in continuing education and lifelong learning (core values in librarianship) while “paying attention to the underlying and systemic causes” of isms (racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, to name a few) and phobias (transphobia, Islamophobia, and others). TIA also means creating spaces for vital, unavoidable conversations (uncomfortable to painful) to occur regularly.

Though there are many concepts covered in the book, there are some gaps and areas that could be more deeply addressed. Whiteness, white supremacy, racial battle fatigue, tokenism, intersectionality, and vocational awe disproportionately impact BIPOC library workers and pose barriers to TIA. Even with these gaps, this is a book that everyone from current library workers to library school students will benefit from.

Libraries have done a lot of work in this area, but there is much more to learn and do. The onus is on us to know about our traumas, to understand the impacts of our trauma and that of our patrons, and how traumas affect how the work is done. This book serves as a primer for learning and implementing a TIA. Finally, this book can be returned to time and time again, to glean new ideas and deepen the reader’s knowledge base. This is the book if you want to continue to further inclusion, equity, cultural humility in librarianship and resist retraumatization, stigmatization, and othering. — *Twanna Hodge, University of Florida Libraries*

Deconstructing Service in Libraries: Intersections of Identities and Expectations. Veronica Arellano Douglas and Joanna Gadsby, eds. Sacramento, CA: Litwin Books, 2020. 404p. Paperback, \$22.75 (ISBN 978-1634000604).



Editors Veronica Arellano Douglas and Joanna Gadsby have assembled a work that contributes to many perspectives on service in the library. The collection presents 19 chapters of diverse individual experiences from library workers—most of whom are academics, with a few from public libraries. These perspectives deal with important issues of service in the profession as seen through the lenses of workers with specific group identities. These identities as presented by the authors include but are not limited to the disabled, gender identity and sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, and stigmatization of fat bodies (terms used by the contributors).

Among the issues presented are: the role of the librarian as a service provider or collaborator, service expectations and challenges, inclusivity of all ranks and group identities, and the role of library workers in the larger hierarchical organization that they work in.

When considering their role in meeting information needs, libraries tend to categorize staff

into professional and paraprofessional. The book looks at these contested terms and suggests more inclusive language that recognizes the roles of all colleagues who aim to serve with or without holding a master's in library science. Some prefer the more collegial term of collaborator. Browndorf and Seale present the case that there is a pecking order in job positions, with technical/specialist librarians at the top and librarians who teach first-year students at the bottom. Readers can decide if they view their academic librarian work as providing a service to or as a collaboration with the faculty who made the requests.

Though some librarians may disagree with the perception of service provider versus collaborator, all feel the effects of giving service. Several of the authors describe the ways that the professional services rendered by librarians to patrons present varying levels of unassailable challenges that impact the librarian personally. Carolina Hernandez and Mary K. Oberlies illustrate this by drawing on Dr. Lynn Gusa's term of "White Institutional Presence" (WIP) and the toll it exerts on members of an organization who are nonwhite. This work and others in the volume document the emotional labor required by library work and its impact on the individual. Emotional labor, an occupational commonality born out of a profession with a service model, is succinctly articulated by Monica Samsky, one of the coauthors of the chapter titled "Access Services": "As someone who saw the opportunity to move into technical services as a way of recovering from public service burnout, I think that the unwillingness or inability to do Access Services work, the urge to silo it, also has something to do with the unspoken recognition that customer service work is hard work that requires more emotional labor than many library workers are comfortable with." Several authors elaborate on maintaining professional service standards while simultaneously prioritizing their agency and self-care.

Contributors do a good job delving expansively into the intertwinement of group and occupational identities and the troubling tensions that arise between executing the service tenets of the profession and the broader institutional context in which we do this work. Each author discusses their unique challenges of providing service as a member of a marginalized group. The patriarchal structures of institutions and their coterminous societies negatively impact and devalue service work. An example of one such devaluation of employee's labor is the assertion by coauthors Megan Browndorf and Maura Seale on the feminization of job duties within the profession. Andrew Wang, in his chapter "Bottoms Up," concurs, sharing Asian stereotypes that stigmatize them as docile employees. Kelsey George builds on a common thread throughout the book that looks at how social identities intersect with labor issues in the work environment. Her chapter includes a well-researched section on the quintessential actions that occur when dominant and nondominant groups coexist in the library sphere. George looks closely at microaggressions in the workplace and how they are often perpetuated by white middle-class women against other groups of marginalized women. Readers would be interested in mitigation strategies that combat the accretions of stress from the physical and emotional labor that some library workers are made to perform.

The book also tackles the positionality of libraries within the wider context of traditional patriarchal white systems. Libraries operate within the ambit of these hierarchal oppressive structures and often find themselves at the mercies of universities and government budgets, forcing them to do more with less. These increased efficiencies take a toll on human labor.

The book is well written, extremely informative, and fairly comprehensive in scope. More important, the familiar trope of the library as merely a dispenser of information is upended by the personal perspectives offered here by librarians from various identity groups working

within the library system. The book would be improved by offering more coverage of potential solutions to the problems with service as a library value. A glossary would have been a welcome addition to the book, because certain terms and phrases are used in a specialized sense.

Editors Arellano Douglas and Gadsby do an excellent job compiling this volume, presenting cohesive and crucial literature on issues pertaining to service in libraries and their effects on the LIS worker. The references at the end of each chapter allow for further exploration of the topic discussed. Academic librarians will benefit from the insight of shared experiences and a rich analysis of the role played by the library within the larger sphere of the university. Although each chapter offers a different perspective, all address a common theme: the difficult experiences endured by service providers during a library career.—*Nandi Prince, New York City College of Technology*