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Review of Interdisciplinarity and Academic Libraries

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Review of Interdisciplinarity and Academic Libraries

Keywords

Interdisciplinarity, academic libraries

Review of *Interdisciplinarity and Academic Libraries*

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Interdisciplinarity and Academic Libraries,
Edited by Daniel C. Mack and Craig Gibson,
ACRL Publications in Librarianship, No. 66, 2012

This book examines the definition of interdisciplinarity and the related terms of multidisciplinary, transdisciplinarity and cross-disciplinarity and how these can, and have, affected the work in academic libraries. The ten essays range from definitions and history of interdisciplinarity to the work implications in specific areas of today's academic libraries.

The greatest strength of the book is the first three essays that provide clear and sound discussions of the evolution of interdisciplinarity and the roles of those involved in the creation and dissemination of scholarly materials. Herubel's essay "Disciplinary Morphologies, Interdisciplinarity" is perhaps the best discussion of the relationship of disciplines and interdisciplines that I have read. It is clear, with excellent illustrations to enhance his discussion of the topics. Herubel also provides examples of interdisciplinary and subdisciplinary studies and their potential effect on the work of academic librarians. Such examples show how the concepts can be applied to any subdiscipline or interdisciplinary field.

The remaining essays examine specific aspects of academic librarianship (for example, organization of information, collection management and references services) and how the librarian can, and should, adapt to the changes in higher education brought about by interdisciplinary studies. Each author encourages librarians to reexamine how work is done in their library and for each librarian to adapt to the nature of interdisciplinary work.

Although not a specific emphasis of the book, several authors discuss the use of digital material and resources to improve access to information for those working in interdisciplinary fields.

There are examples of digital services that have been created to support such work and how academic librarians are working to reach out to faculty and students.

This book is not just "big" ideas, but also has specific examples for librarians to work with. For example, Woolums discusses new aspects to librarians' roles as negotiators, publishers, and advocates. Ehrlich and Carraño provide case studies for ways that subject specialists can work with interdisciplinary areas. Jones provides specific ways that library instruction can include and encourage interdisciplinary thinking.

While the book focuses on the nature of interdisciplinary studies in higher education and academic librarianship, the authors do emphasize that faculty and publishers still think in terms of the disciplinary silos that exist on most academic campuses. For many, higher education administrations and organizations (including libraries) continue to work in ways that are most comfortable and well-known. These essays provide ideas and discussion points for academic librarians helpful for dialogue when talking to faculty, students, publishers, and university administrators.

This book will be of use to academic librarians in all sizes of libraries. As an LIS educator, I think that these essays will be valuable to library science students to help them understand the changing nature of academic librarianship.