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Review of Information Tomorrow: Reflections on Technology and The Future of Public and Academic Libraries

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INFORMATION TOMORROW: REFLECTIONS ON TECHNOLOGY AND THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC AND ACADEMIC LIBRARIES. Edited by Rachel Singer Gordon. Foreword by Stephen Abram. *Medford, New Jersey: Information Today, Inc., 2007, 280 pp., ISBN 978-1-57387-303-1, softbound, $35.00.*

First, let me say that this is an excellent book and one that I thoroughly enjoyed reading. There is something in it for almost every librarian regardless of one's specialty. However, having said that, these edited works with a different author for every chapter are certainly hard to review! The topics covered range from broad to very specific and from well written to less well written. Additionally, it is unlikely that many librarians will be interested in every topic covered, but rather pick and chose those that are most pertinent to them. So, let me report on how the book is organized and then give some examples of what the reader will find. There are 16 chapters, each with a different author. These 16 chapters are arranged into three parts: Formats and Functions, Change and Challenges, and 2.0 —and Beyond.

Part 1, Formats and Functions, has five chapters. Chapter 1, The Mobile Age, covers the handheld device market. As author Megan Fox points out, "Many content providers, including libraries, are adapting their regular information pages to be PDA-friendly." It seems clear that library patrons of the future will be accessing much of their information on the "small screen." Next we learn about FLOSS or Free/Libre/Open Source Software from Daniel Chudnov, and I have to admit while I was aware of the open source software movement, I had not previously heard the term "FLOSS." Chudnov predicts that in the future "we can expect the "library-ness" of today's automation systems to fade as we adopt more nonlibrary software to our needs. Part 1 continues with John Blyberg's interesting discussion of the growing difficulties between libraries and ILS vendors in a chapter called, Mouse Bites Cat: Taking Back the 21st-Century ILS. Finally, part 1 ends with two articles on the future of electronic and scholarly publishing, open

access, and the libraries evolving role as we move further away from being solely print repositories.

The theme and title of part 2 is Change and Challenges and I found it particularly stimulating. Topics ranged from gaming and the library's role, to Google, to online experience design while also exploring the Read/Write Web and privacy issues. There is clearly a paradox here in that most of these chapters discuss the evolving Social Web where author Michael Stephens encourages librarians to "seek every opportunity to participate and to share their human voice" while author Robert Bocher reminds us that "privacy has been an essential principle of the library profession for many decades." However, I found Joseph Janes's piece on Thriving in the Age of Google perhaps the most transformative. Janes suggests that Google has brought the art of searching to the common man in a way that libraries never could and that as a result, the value of this tool could, "change the way people think about information" in a very positive way for them and for libraries.

Part 3 continues with six chapters on Web 2.0 tools and beyond. Jenny Levine provides a very nice chapter on exactly what Library 2.0 is about—"constant change, making the library user-centered (in all areas), encouraging user participation, reaching out to new users in new ways, creating community (in both our physical and online spaces), and shifting services to where our users are (instead of forcing them to come to us)." From there, Rhonda Trueman, Tom Peters, and Lori Bell explore Second Life and suggest how libraries can participate. Next, Tom Shank and Steven Bell discuss the blended librarian—an academic librarian who combines librarianship, computer technology skills, and instructional design in providing instructional services to students and faculty.

The final three chapters of part 3 cover education and training for librarians for the rapidly evolving future—individuals who may not have originally realized that their job descriptions would eventually include requirements such as "working with technology." Those librarians who find themselves or their staff members facing this dilemma will appreciate Jessamyn West's chapter on Technophobia, Technostress, and Technorealism. The final chapter concludes with Alane Wilson's (former Senior Library Market Consultant, OCLC) piece on the future, Reading Tea Leaves: One Past, Many Futures. She encourages us to recognize that the future is "an extrapolation of the present, not a linear path."

Information Tomorrow begins with a forward by Stephen Abram followed by editor Rachel Singer Gordon's preface. It concludes with an Appendix containing a list of all of the Web sites mentioned in the 16 chapters, short biographies of all of the contributors and editor, and an index.

This work provides an excellent overview of all of the many paths that librarianship may take in the coming years and would be a beneficial read for any librarian who needs to ensure that they are keeping up with trends outside of their own specialty. I particularly recommend it for all library directors and those responsible for strategic planning efforts in their own institutions.

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