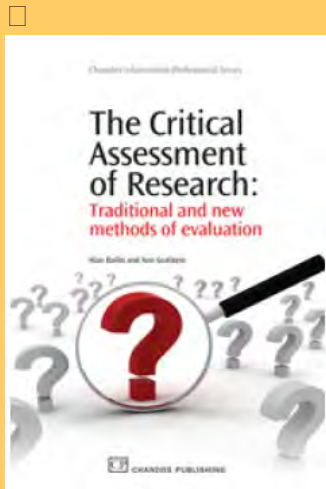


# Book Reviews



**Bailin, A. and Grafstein, A. *The Critical Assessment of Research: Traditional and New Methods of Evaluation*. Oxford: Chandos Publishing, 2010. ISBN 978-1-8433-4543 5. \$75. Reviewed by Barbie Keiser**

Alan Bailin and Ann Grafstein-- associate professors of library services at Hofstra University-- have written a concise volume (99 pages, not including an extensive list of references and index) that portrays so nicely what individuals need to think about and question whenever they look at research results (or hear them reported in the news). It's the perfect assigned reading for students whom we tell need to look for scholarly, peer-reviewed sources, though we know that those too need to be looked at critically as well. It's written for the layman, utilizing examples that are viewed from a high level, so one need not be a statistician to read the carefully crafted work. Each chapter introduces a limited concept, presents cases that illustrate aspects of the concept, and then briefly summarizes what readers should take away from what they have just read.

The authors begin with a chapter on what is considered to be "the gold standard," discussing peer review as a manuscript selection process with "experts" who help the publisher decide if an article should be published (noting that research published in books does not get the same scrutiny). Publishers' reputations, author credentials and the reputation of the researcher are also helpful in assessing the quality of research. The authors demonstrate how news media and the publications

themselves cloud the process of assessing validity of research results by alluding to the peer-review process or awards given to the author/researcher.

Chapter 3 focuses on the funding of research, utilizing three brief cases that illustrate how the sponsoring organization can affect what research is conducted, what results are ignored, and how research is interpreted: Hormone replacement therapy (HRT), Enron, and *The Bell Curve*. In less than 20 pages, the authors deftly maneuver through the three cases, reminding the reader that while funding of research may seem obvious in some instances, it may be less so when dealing with ideological biases of those reporting and/or commenting on the results.

The conservative nature of science, which resists having paradigms disrupted, is the subject of the following chapter. "What is not scientifically 'thinkable' – not a legitimate question within a current paradigm – may be viewed at a later date as a significant breakthrough." The authors use Chapter 4 to consider how the accepted scientific paradigm can influence researchers over time, such as the validity of intelligence testing. They look at the evolving views of medical research into the cause and treatment of ulcers. The third case in the chapter involves literary and arts criticism and how the gender of the critics limited what in the past was seen as artistic and worthy of our support.

How research is disseminated also plays a role in assessing its validity. The authors remind us that research confirming accepted theories might get a "pass," while research that challenges conventional norms has a difficult time making it into the right venues to be accepted as a bona fide research effort. New research topics, particularly those that arouse strong negative reaction such as feminism and homosexuality did in the 1970s, have a difficult time getting into mainstream press and peer-reviewed journals. Chapter 5 also addresses "how economic considerations can lead both companies

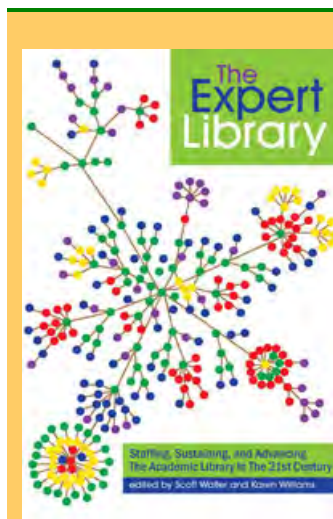
and researchers to suppress research results which could have unfavorable economic consequences for them.”

The authors discuss a bias toward publishing positive results of pharmaceutical research using antidepressants as an example. “According to the published literature, the results of nearly all of the trials of antidepressants were positive. In contrast, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) analysis of the trial data showed that roughly half of the trials had positive results. Why was so much significant research left unpublished?” is the topic for the second case in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 concludes by addressing works in non-commercial publication venues known as ‘gray literature,’ or “information produced on all levels of government, academics, business and industry in electronic and print formats not controlled by commercial publishing, i.e., where publishing is not the primary activity of the producing body.” Bailin and Grafstein use foundations as their example, cautioning the reader to know the biases of think tanks as they read through policy studies.

The final chapter of this slim volume reviews the techniques and strategies that can help to uncover the research you need, admonishing students (and others) to look beyond the researcher and publishing venue to the context within which that research was performed. The purpose of the work is best summarized by the authors in the closing paragraph: “What we have attempted to do is make readers more aware of some of the issues in the critical assessment of research that go beyond the gold standards, in the hope that this awareness will lead our readers to ask the probing questions that always need to be asked of researchers.” Bailin and Grafstein have succeeded in their attempt. The book is “a good read,” thoroughly enjoyable and easy to understand. It helps every professor and librarian go beyond mere talk of the need for using scholarly literature and has already persuaded my MBA students to think more critically about what they read and where they turn for authentic research.

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**Walter, S. and Williams, K., eds.**  
*The Expert Library: Sustaining, Staffing, and Advancing the Academic Library in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.*  
**Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2010. ISBN 978-0-8389-8551-9. (pbk.). \$48.**  
**Reviewed by Barbie Keiser**

The Expert Library is uneven—and not in a bad sense at all. Yes, each chapter is authored by a different contributor, but all are eminently qualified to address the subject matter. The book has something for everyone; each reader will find one chapter of interest, and probably more, though it’s unlikely that any reader will find all equally relevant to their particular environments.

If there is a unifying, overarching theme for the book, it’s the internal perspective that the editors have charged chapter authors: address organizational staffing issues in responses to changes in academia. Each chapter takes a penetrating look at the subject matter beginning with a review of the literature. The editors point to James G. Neal (Vice President for Information Services and University librarian, Columbia University) as having “moved the discussion of change beyond studies of specific job types (e.g., reference librarians, catalogers, subject specialists) toward a more fundamental questioning of the variety of professional services that an academic library must provide if it is to remain relevant to campus concerns in the twenty-first century.”

The opening chapter by David W. Lewis (Dean of the University Library, IUPUI) describes how libraries can build capacity through creative

approaches to staffing, including recruiting new professionals while continuing to develop the skills of existing personnel so that the libraries are able to undertake new roles. In “Academic library staffing a decade from now,” Lewis sets the stage for others who delve deeper into specific aspects of the subject-at-hand.

In “New challenges in academic library personnel selection,” John Lehner (Assistant Dean for Library Systems, Personnel, and Planning, University of Houston Libraries) describes how personnel recruitment and selection need to change. What we look for as we interview potential candidates should be attributes that will allow the new employee to feel comfortable with change, flexible in terms of job description and organizational reporting structures.

R. David Lankes (Director of the Information Institute, Syracuse University) looks for innovators, recognizing that innovation does not spring up (or flourish) in a vacuum. How we motivate personnel and facilitate innovation is the subject of Chapter 3, “Innovators wanted: No experience necessary.”

Craig Gibson and Jamie Wright Coniglio (George Mason University Libraries) look at the role of liaison librarians who are often embedded in subject-specific, faculty libraries, close to the users of their services. The authors identify four competencies that need to be addressed by future liaison librarians: enhanced client services; knowledge management; teaching and learning expertise; outreach, advocacy and communications.

Stephanie H. Crowe and Janice M. Jaguszewski look at core competencies and KSAs at the University of Minnesota libraries. The three appendices to their chapter provide concrete examples of professional expectations. Marta L. Brunner (UCLA) takes a look at the CLIR Postdoctoral Fellowship Program and wonders aloud how that model could be applied to new MLIS graduates, “giving these newly minted librarians as much exposure to and involvement in scholarly collaborations as possible.” Michael Furlough (Assistant Dean for Scholarly Communications and the Co-Director of the Office

of Digital Scholarly Publishing, Penn State University) looks at library publishing services, providing several examples of scholarly publishing start-up operations.

In Chapter 9, Jake R. Carlson and Jeremy R. Garritano (Perdue University) address the organization structure and staffing models of libraries as they shift to support the scientist as virtual user. How the traditional librarian deals with interdisciplinary research initiatives, data management, preservation, curation, and access “to enrich research outcomes,” is the subject of “E-science, cyberinfrastructure, and the changing face of scholarship.”

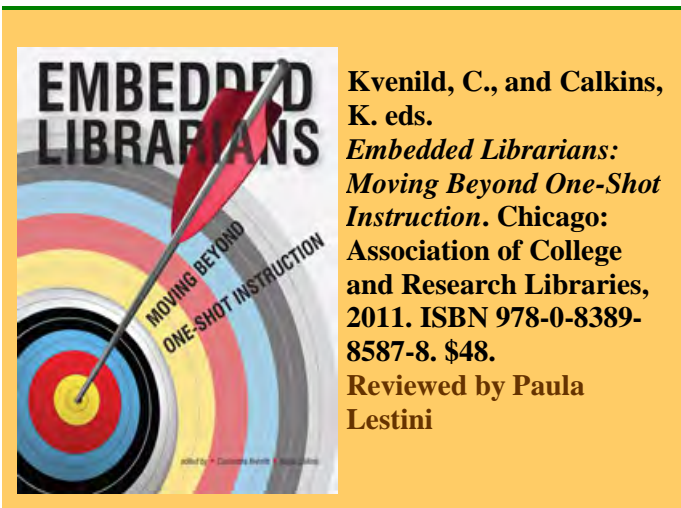
Chapter 10 illustrates how catalogers have successfully shifted to becoming metadata librarians and the important role they play within academic and research libraries. “Listen up librarians” talks about marketing and the messages we send. I loved the “what to do if you flunked your first test” and “how to survive your first all-nighter”... talk about information you can use delivered when you need it most. The need for a consistent voice is a major takeaway from Eric Bartheld’s (University of Maryland) chapter on “Creative disorder.”

In “Teaching the teachers,” Beth S. Woodard and Lisa Jannicke Hinchcliffe (University of Illinois and Urbana-Champaign) speak to the need for upgrading the teaching skills of librarians. Recognizing that all librarians teach, but few are formally trained, they speak to resources that exist on their (and other) campuses.

In the final chapter, “Creating smooth sailing,” Elaine Jennerich (University of Washington) and M. Sue Baughman (University of Maryland) talk about organizational development, appreciative inquiry, assessment, coaching, and how to transform your library into a learning organization no matter what changes are in your future. Truly, lessons to live by.

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**Kvenild, C., and Calkins, K. eds.**  
***Embedded Librarians: Moving Beyond One-Shot Instruction.* Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2011. ISBN 978-0-8389-8587-8. \$48.**  
**Reviewed by Paula Lestini**

In much of the professional literature, we are reading about embedding librarians and library services as alternatives to the traditional one-shot library session. Editors Cassandra Kvenild and Kaijsa Calkins have pulled together an impressive group of academic librarians who share their diverse experiences in embedded librarianship. Backgrounds range from curator of Cross-Cultural Dance Resources Collections housed in the Herberger Institute School of Dance to the director of a first-year learning community tailored to at-risk students. This gathering of minds and experiences from across the spectrum of academic libraries provides a broad view of what embedded librarianship can be.

*Embedded Librarians: Moving Beyond One-shot Instruction* is organized into six parts. Part One places the concept and practice of embedding into a historical context. In the first chapter of this section, Matthew Brower points out that embedded librarianship is defined from a multitude of perspectives in the professional literature and that his goal was to seek out the commonalities among those perspectives. The rest of the book reemphasizes the existence of varied interpretations of this concept through case studies, reports, research, and anecdotal narratives.

The first two chapters of the book provide a springboard into the remaining parts. Part Two examines ways in which librarians may be embedded in the first-year experience. Chapter three emphasizes the challenges of retaining at-risk

students and how embedded librarians might aid these students in the transition from high school to the college setting and the pressure to perform research at a higher level, develop study skills, and engage in critical thinking. The key is forming mentoring relationships with this population of students within the context of the first-year program. The authors contend that librarians can be instrumental in retention efforts by playing a key role in general education courses in the first year.

Subsequent parts of *Embedded Librarians* include: Embedding Instruction Online, Embedding in the Disciplines & Across Them, Embedding in Graduate and Professional Programs, and Embedding in Innovative Spaces. Each chapter explores a different focus within these categories. For some librarians, the embedded models presented may appear to be impossible to implement depending on the size of the library staff. However, regardless of the limits beyond one's control, there is much to be gleaned from the pages of this book no matter the size of the library staff. This is an excellent resource for those librarians who have been engaged in embedded librarianship as well as for those librarians just beginning to test the waters. Instruction librarians will find this to be a valuable addition to their professional collection.

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