

Book Review

Kerby, M. (2019). *An introduction to collection development for school librarians, Second edition*. Chicago, IL: American Association of School Librarians.

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According to the *State of America's Libraries Report 2019*¹, 91% of the 90,400 (K-12) schools in the United States have a library media center, but not all are staffed with full-time librarians, or library media or technology specialists. That means that some of those responsible for the school library may not be sufficiently trained. *An introduction to collection development for school librarians* by Mona Kerby could make a significant difference in the ability of these individuals to perform their duties and turn a room into a successful, vibrant learning facility.

In the first paragraph of the book's introduction, *Ready to roll up your sleeves?*, the author describes the reader she is targeting with her slim volume of 104pp. (index included): School librarians just starting in their careers, graduate candidates, and "practicing school librarians who want to improve their collections." Kerby admits that this work is not meant to replace textbooks used in graduate courses for collection development, but rather serve as a reminder of the steps needed to assure that learners have "access to quality materials" that are not "dusty, outdated, and inaccurate," beginning with a collection development plan (p. ix).

The purpose of the book is to help newly minted librarians use time wisely by focusing on what's essential, especially during those crucial first weeks of a new term. In this, the author succeeds, admirably. The 3-5 exercises at the end of each chapter—designed to assist readers as they implement in their school what's been covered just a few pages earlier—almost give the text the feel of a workbook.

No one could doubt the bona fides of the author, a professor and coordinator of graduate programs in school librarianship at McDaniel College in Maryland. Her relaxed style of writing—a pleasure to read—makes a formal book review antithetical. The work, best characterized by the chapter titles such as *What do I do first?* (Chapter 1) and *What should I learn next?* (Chapter 2), say it all. Here, the author provides lists of tasks to tackle during those crucial first weeks of the school term along with short case studies, such as *My personal selection criteria*. School librarians/media specialists/technicians consulting these tables and checklists will get to know more about the learners attending their classes and the curricula being used in their schools.

Chapters 3 (*What sources do I use to select new materials?*) and 4 (*What sources do I use to fill in collection gaps?*) are precisely why the text is better suited for educators who are *not* library specialists or interns/undergraduate students who may not have

¹ <http://www.ala.org/news/state-americas-libraries-report-2019/school-libraries>

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completed their studies. There's nothing innovative here, but it is a good review of what is covered in any introduction to materials selection course.

Even seasoned librarians will benefit from the chapter on weeding (Chapter 5) and evaluating collections (Chapter 6), as well as the tips for turning a complaint into a positive (Chapter 7), and showcasing the collection (Chapter 8). This is an extremely practical text, perfect for anyone working in a school library. Where it succeeds best is helping the person associated with the library appreciate how to enlist others in a joint effort to shape the library as a valued asset of their school. Get hold of this book before the start of the next school term and you'll be prepared for years to come. It's a thoroughly delightful read and useful to boot!