

**Schmidt, Krista, and Tim Carstens. *The Subject Liaison's Survival Guide to Technical Services*. Chicago: ALA Editions, 2017. 9780838915028. 95 pages. \$40.00. [Book review]**

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### **Abstract:**

This slim volume is a practical overview of technical services activities that is designed to inform subject liaisons about functions that may influence their work. The genesis of this title was a Charleston Conference presentation given by Schmidt and Carstens in 2014. Schmidt serves as Reference Librarian-Science Liaison at Western Carolina University's (WCU) Hunter Library, while Carstens was serving as Associate Dean of Library Services at WCU upon his retirement in 2016. The lack of such resources in the library literature and the value of an extended exploration of the topic for both practicing subject liaisons and graduate students inspired the publication.

**Keyword:** book review | library | technical services | subject liaisons

### **Article:**

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The introduction provides a clear outline of the volume, and it defines the scope of the book while pointing out several topics for further conversations between liaisons and their colleagues in technical services. A glossary provides definitions of terms and acronyms. Resources are listed in the bibliography, and a thorough index is included.

Schmidt and Carstens offer an overview of collection development by focusing on aspects important to subject liaisons such as understanding how it is implemented and who is

involved, becoming familiar with the library's collection development policy, and managing and selecting resources. They describe the role of technical services colleagues in providing reports, usage and financial data for resources, and budget information. The authors discuss the advantage of understanding timing and deadlines for order placement, when regular collection development and budget reports are generated, and what the expected turnaround time is for various workflows in the department.

Descriptions of acquisitions activities provide details of ordering, receiving, and processing. The authors explain that by understanding workflows, subject liaisons know what to expect and are better able to respond to questions that faculty and other users might have about new and continuing collection resources. Cataloging topics cover original and copy cataloging, standards, and the act of enhancing catalog records to improve the user experience. The final chapter discusses collection maintenance, including weeding and withdrawal of both physical and electronic collections. The authors make clear that this activity can be sensitive for library staff as well as faculty, and they offer ideas to help the process go smoothly.

Communication is a theme repeated throughout the book; by taking the initiative and talking with contacts in technical services, the subject liaison learns about collection development, acquisitions, and cataloging functions, thus informing their work with faculty and others requesting resources. By establishing comfortable working relationships with individuals in technical services, the liaison is more likely to approach members of the department with questions or issues.

A creative and useful feature is lists of "Questions You Should Be Asking" that appear at strategic points in the text. After learning about a topic, the reader is presented a list of questions that can be asked of colleagues in technical services to provide context for the conventions and policies that apply to the local situation both within the library and on campus. These detailed lists could also be helpful to new technical services staff getting to know their department. In addition, highlighted paragraphs offer practical tips about issues the subject liaison may encounter such as knowing the difference between budget cuts and reversions.

Subject liaisons new to working in academic libraries and graduate students interested in serving in that role will benefit from this description of technical services activities as they apply to the liaison librarian. This resource could also benefit technical services librarians as they help to orient new subject librarians to collection development and related activities in their library.