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## **Rev. of *The Successful Academic Librarian: Winning Strategies from Library Leaders*, ed. By Gwen Meyer Gregory**

**Kelly Rhodes McBride**

### **REVIEW**

***The Successful Academic Librarian: Winning Strategies from Library Leaders***. Ed. Gwen Meyer Gregory. Medford, N.J.: Information Today, 2005. 231p. \$39.50 (ISBN 1573872326). LC 2005-17201.

What does it take to work in an academic environment? What essential skills are needed to be successful in academe? *The Successful Academic Librarian* provides useful information and tips. If you are a librarian considering work in an academic library, *The Successful Academic Librarian* is the book for you.

Editor Gwen Meyer Gregory has compiled the experiences of librarians working in higher education, including community colleges and research institutions. Divided into three parts, the book covers the following: "The basics—get-ting off to a good start"; "Things to think about—getting and keeping a great job"; and "Tales from the trenches—academic librarians share their stories."

Part one serves to acquaint the reader with the multifaceted world that is academic librarianship. Rebecca Miller and Nancy Sosna Bohm describe the "importance of getting along with supervisors, coworkers, support staff, and student assistants as a critical part of the job." They suggest that librarians "establish a personal routine." This routine might en-tail outlining goals and objectives, making a list of duties, and prioritizing everyday activities. Many of their suggestions are not specific to academic librarianship per se (e.g., organizing your workplace) but would be useful in any professional environment.

Elizabeth O. Hutchins states that be-ginning a career in academic librarianship is like moving to a foreign country, one should expect to experience some degree of culture shock; "it is a good idea to learn as much as one can about those who in-habit this new land." Included are a few key questions to ask: (1) Is the library primarily a teaching library or research library? (2) Is there an information literacy plan or program? (3) Do the librarians have faculty status?

Hutchins's discussion also provides assistance to those new to the profession in facilitating collaborative relationships with teaching faculty. According to Hutchins, "understanding and embracing the expertise we offer to partnerships with teaching faculty is fundamental to viewing ourselves, and being viewed by others, as colleagues and educators."

Why should librarians publish? Ac-cording to Joan Beam and Cathy Cran-ston, "publication is necessary, not merely to maintain faculty status for the profession or for an individual to achieve

tenure or promotion, but to add to the body of knowledge that goes into creating our professional literature.” Academic librarians generally publish more than librarians working in other settings; on average, academic librarians write at least one solo-authored, peer-reviewed journal article that is typically published in the library literature. Most useful in this chapter is the information the authors include on how to get started. For those librarians new to the academic setting, this information is invaluable. Beam and Cranston outline the process from sub-mission to publication and include pretty much everything in between.

Part one concludes with Michelle Mach’s questioning what service is. What follows is a rationale for participating in service, an overview of the different types of service available, and information on how to best choose a service activity. According to Mach, librarians engage in service for many reasons, including networking and meeting new people, developing new skills, and serving as representatives for the library. Mach also encourages new librarians to be “persistent and flexible” when looking for service opportunities and to seek guidance in selecting appropriate activities.

Faculty status continues to be a controversial issue in the library profession. Gwen Meyer Gregory and Mary Beth Chambers reveal that there are many variations of faculty and academic status for librarians. Some academic institutions give academic status to librarians that “recognizes librarians as professional staff but does not confer the rights and privileges of faculty.” The authors outline the benefits, responsibilities, and potential drawbacks of a faculty appointment: “knowing more about your choices will allow you to make better ones.”

Examined in part two are the interview process, mentoring, continuing education, unionization, and documentation, and compared are academic institutions in the U.S. with those in Canada. Karl Bridges attempts to walk the reader through the job interview process from application to interview to accepting a position, stressing the importance of “reading the ad carefully.” Bridges emphasizes that if you are not qualified for a position, do not waste the employer’s time or your own. Included is helpful advice on how to present a professional vita, choose references, and navigate applying for a job from a position of weakness (e.g., being unemployed, fired, or denied tenure). Bridges includes a list of do’s and don’ts covering everything from what to do when interviews go bad to handling rejection.

Part three is composed of firsthand accounts from librarians in the field. Librarians discuss their unique experiences in the realm of technical services; share their opinions on the tenure system from the inside; tell what it is like to move to academe midcareer; and, finally, give the inside scoop from the vantage point of the library director.

I was skeptical about this book when I first began to read it but soon realized that the authors provide a comprehensive examination of what it takes to work in an academic setting. They cover many of the major areas unfamiliar to librarians working outside academe, specifically, faculty status, service, publishing, promotion, and tenure. The first-person accounts and experiences are helpful in understanding the unique environment of academic librarianship. The annotated bibliography provides resources for further use. *The Successful Academic Librarian* presents a wealth of information for navigating the academic setting that will prove useful to librarians at any stage of their career.— *Kelly C. Rhodes, Appalachian State University.*