

Being Evidence Based in Library and Information Practice. Eds. Denise Koufogiannakis and Alison Brettle. London: Facet Publishing, 2016. xiv, 224p. Paper, \$75.00 (ISBN 978-1-78330-071-6).

In the penultimate chapter of this work, contributor Bill Fisher asks a rhetorical question: "Evidence-based library and information practice; who could argue or take issue with an idea like that?" (151). In an edited volume examining "evidence based library and information practice" (EBLIP), this question is not tongue-in-cheek. Common sense, or perhaps wishful thinking, suggests that librarians *already* employ information in their decision-making. It is therefore necessary to clarify that the authors have a specific definition for being "evidence based." They define EBLIP as "approaching [library] practice with a particular mindset," arguing "*being evidence based* means that you consider your practice from a curious and questioning perspective, with a view to continuous improvement... you question what you are currently doing and think about possible ways to do things better" (165). The work, with its fourteen short chapters, examines the processes by which information is gathered, processed, and acted upon.

In this work, fourteen librarians and information specialists from North America and Europe discuss the implementation of EBLIP within the context of academic, public, health, school, and special libraries. Casting a wide net across multiple countries and areas of librarianship, the editors promise a volume that "brings together recent theory, research and case studies from practice environments across the broad field of librarianship to illustrate how librarians can incorporate the principles of evidence-based library and information practice (EBLIP) into their work" (3). The book serves as an introduction to the topic, with detailed literature reviews provided in each chapter. The work, published by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, also places an emphasis upon the concept of library practice and the "librarian-practitioner," which is central to EBLIP. The importance of pragmatism, and making allowances for institutional needs and variations, are also defining features of the work. At its heart, the work advocates for further examination and implantation of EBLIP in the library profession, providing specific examples as proof of its success.

The volume is broken into two parts. Part I, "Background and Model," by editors Denise Koufogiannakis and Alison Brettle, examines methodical and conceptual approaches toward EBLIP. They track its origins and growth from the Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) movement in the medical sciences during the 1990s, which was subsequently adopted by health libraries before spreading to the wider profession. In addition to a broad topical background, the editors suggest a detailed, five-stage circular approach toward EBLIP, providing a methodical "framework" for researchers. Their stages are: articulate, assemble, assess, agree, and adapt. "Articulate" (chapter 3) advocates the use of systematic reviews, Delphi studies and questionnaires, and frameworks to construct useful questions. "Assemble" (chapter 4) discusses the process of gathering information through research, observation, feedback, and from qualitative and quantitative sources. "Assess" (chapter 5) examines evaluation of information, advocating critical appraisal through systematic reviews, evidence summaries, and TAPUPAS: "Transparency, Accuracy, Purposivity [sic], Utility, Propriety, Accessibility, Specificity" (53). To temper the methodical tone of previous chapters, "Agree" (chapter 6) addresses the reality that "decisions are rarely based solely on rational processes," and that pragmatic group consensus is necessary to move forward (60). Finally, in "Adapt" (chapter 7), Koufogiannakis and Brettle address the necessity of evaluating the implementation through benchmarking, reflection, performance measurements, and audits. The section acknowledges the importance of institutional, personal, and practical differences, arguing that every stage of this process needs to be revised and adapted to meet practical, local needs. The editors stress that this process is a repeating

cycle; after the evaluation of the “adapt” stage, the librarian returns to “articulation” and the cycle begins again. They propose a process that is always ongoing, refining itself.

Part II, “EBLIP in Action,” is presented as the successful application of EBLIP in several fields of librarianship. Each chapter provides a literature review, a short background of EBLIP within their field, and case studies, though the levels of detail for each vary between chapters. The chapters and contributors are: “Practitioner-researchers and EBLIP” by Virginia Wilson; “Academic Libraries” by Mary Somerville and Lorie Kloda; “Public Libraries” by Pam Ryan and Becky Cole; “Health Libraries” by Jonathan Eldredge, Joanne Gard Marshall, Alison Brettle, Heather Holmes, Lotta Haglund, and Rick Wallace; “School Libraries” by Carol Gordon; “Special Libraries” by Bill Fisher. In addition to providing examples of EBLIP in each field, the authors outline relevant trends in their fields and discuss the benefits of EBLIP methods in their areas.

An outlying chapter, perhaps of particular note to *College & Research Libraries* readers, is Wilson’s “Practitioner-researchers and EBLIP.” Drawing upon the volume’s consistent theme of the library practitioner, Wilson presents EBLIP as an avenue through which librarians can become active researchers. “Traditionally,” Wilson argues, “research has been undertaken by academics in higher education, faculty members of the professoriate who often have a 40/40/20 work assignment split between teaching, research and service” (81). EBLIP, however, has “encouraged practitioners to conduct research to help inform their own practice” (81). By employing the methodological studies, data collection, literature reviews, and systematic reviews necessary for EBLIP, librarians become “practitioner-researchers” who produce new scholarship that improves the profession. Wilson acknowledges obstacles that librarians face when trying to conduct research, notably scarcity of time, funding, pre-existing job duties, and often a lack of a research degree. Though Wilson is interested in librarian research throughout the entire profession, her argument for the “practitioner-researcher” model is of interest to academic librarians who are expected to publish and conduct research. In addition to improving library policy within their home institution, systematic studies of practice can improve the profession as a whole and provide librarians with practical subject matter for their own research.

As a whole, the work provides interesting examples of evidence-based practice, and the broad scope and range of contributors provides a snapshot of the entire library profession. The volume offers an overview spanning multiple disciplines, if not an exhaustive examination of the topic in every form and permutation. Indeed, a significant argument of the work is that further research is needed in all areas, and this volume is meant as an introduction and catalyst for future studies. Given this stated aim, the strength of the work is its broad scope, which does indeed introduce the reader to EBLIP theory (Part I) and its practical application (Part II). The weakness of this approach is that it *is* broad. The work boasts contributors from the United States (seven), Canada (four), the United Kingdom (two), and Sweden (one). Librarianship in these countries varies considerably, and experiences in each may not be reflective of library practice at other institutions. Similarly, dedicating short chapters, each averaging less than 15 pages, to an entire field of librarianship means it cannot offer thorough coverage. The “background” and literature review sections tended to be the most thorough aspects of the chapters, though the case studies could be more detailed. This book also faces the perennial challenge of every edited volume: cohesion between chapters beyond a broad shared topic. The proposed organization of the work makes sense, with Part I exploring the overall topic and Part II providing examples of its application. While united in their advocacy of EBLIP, the examples in Part II do not reflect Koufogiannakis and Brettle’s proposed “Articulate, Assemble, Assess, Agree, Adapt” model in Part I. As a result, Part I reads like an extended “best practice” chapter, followed by topically related, and considerably shorter, essays.

Overall, the work provides a useful primer on the topic. Due to its broad scope, it will introduce readers to EBLIP practice, though those interested in more detail will need to consult the journal *Evidence Based Librarianship and Information Practice*, which Koufogiannakis cofounded and edited. Academic librarians will be especially interested in the chapters on practitioner research (Wilson), academic libraries (Somerville and Kloda), and special libraries (Fisher). Ultimately, readers will agree with the underpinning argument of the work; as Fisher asks in his chapter, “Who is going to admit to making irrational decisions, employing conjecture-based practice or flying by the seat of their pants in order to get by in the workplace?” (151). —Richard M. Mikulski, *Drew University*

Mastering Subject Specialties: Practical Advice from the Field. Ed. Karen Sobel. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Libraries Unlimited, 2016. 184p. Paper, \$70.00 (ISBN 978-1-4408-3964-1). LC 2015-043485.

“*Mastering Subject Specialties* aims to share honest, thorough advice from subject specialists with those who may be interested in entering similar fields or simply exploring the range of possibilities,” writes Karen Sobel, the editor and associate professor and research and instruction librarian for art, architecture, music, and urban planning at the University of Colorado Denver. This statement is a succinct summary of what one will find in the book, and it is a beneficial read for both new and seasoned librarians. A timely work, *Mastering Subject Specialties* is a helpful guide for those who need more information on how to become a subject specialist or how to move across and up the library food chain. It is filled with advice and detailed guidance from those in the field and it serves as an exploration tool for anyone connected to librarianship.

With respect to the introduction and the final two chapters, each chapter is written by a subject specialist currently working at universities across the United States. The subjects included in this book are reference and instruction generalists, physical sciences, biological sciences, engineering and applied science, art, music, law, literature and languages, area studies, government information, education, psychology, sociology, and social work, history, religion, and philosophy, business, and health sciences. Sobel posed eight questions to each of the fourteen subject specialists who authored a chapter, which they answered in depth. Topics include subject specialty crossover, the range of settings each specialist can work in, special requirements for the position, coursework, internships and work experience that would prepare one for the specialty, how to move up the “ladder,” professional organizations to join, and professional or scholarly publications to follow for the best information in the field. Each author, with his or her their own experiences, provides the standards and norms in each respective subject area when answering the questions. It is recommended to pursue the chapters on the subject specialties that interest one the most, as there is a clear trajectory on how to prepare for each specialty.

With that being said, every reader should study the introduction and the final two chapters, as they pertain to everyone. The introduction, written by Sobel, speaks about how the characteristics of a specialist position and the academic institution where it is located will affect a librarian completely. So whether one is a new librarian looking for a first position or a seasoned librarian looking to make a move, there are many factors that link the subject specialties discussed in these introductory chapters, and contemplation of these factors can aid one in making informed decisions about one’s place in the field.

The final two chapters, “Changing Fields within Academic and Research Libraries,” written by Josiah M. Drewry of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and “Preparing to Move up the Ladder,” written by Lisa Norberg of K|N Consultants, are also