[Review of] What They Don’t Teach You in Library School

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If you are not fortunate enough to have had a mentor in library school or a first job, it’s not too late. What They Don’t Teach You in Library School, the latest book in the “ALA Guides for the Busy Librarian” series, is a great source of practical, front-line information for beginning and experienced librarians alike, written from the perspective of a library manager with a background in business. This well-organized, easy-to-read manual serves as a useful introduction to those little-anticipated but necessary topics that fall outside the realm of theoretical library school subjects.

Topics are organized in three areas loosely based on a professional’s career stages—those looking for a first job, those new to the job, and those with a few years of experience. However, most topics will be relevant to professionals at any stage in their careers. For example, of particular note is the early chapter on “Making ‘Librarian’ a Brand,” which emphasizes the importance of developing an “elevator pitch,” which is a summary not only of what you do, but also why it is important. Other especially useful chapters include those on job hunting, facilities management, and networking. Many topics deal extensively with necessary general business and career skills, such as public speaking, retailing, strategic planning, and budgeting.

One omission from these useful business skills, although perhaps necessitated by the space limitations of the series format, is a chapter on basic staff management. Few librarians take a management course in library school, yet many are asked to assume management positions early in their careers. The chapter on teamwork does contain useful tips on dealing with coworkers in a project planning context, and much of the information here is relevant to management on a larger scale.

The book is packed with practical information, examples, checklists, and suggestions for further reading, a welcome feature for those readers who wish to delve more fully into a topic. Primarily geared toward beginning library professionals, this book is equally useful as a refresher for those who have been in the field for a few or many years.—Jennifer A. Bartlett, Head of Reference Services, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky