

Careers in Library and Information Services: First-Hand Accounts from Working Professionals, Priscilla K. Shontz (ed.), Bloomsbury Publishing, 2025. 392pp. eBook, \$53.95. 9798216185765.

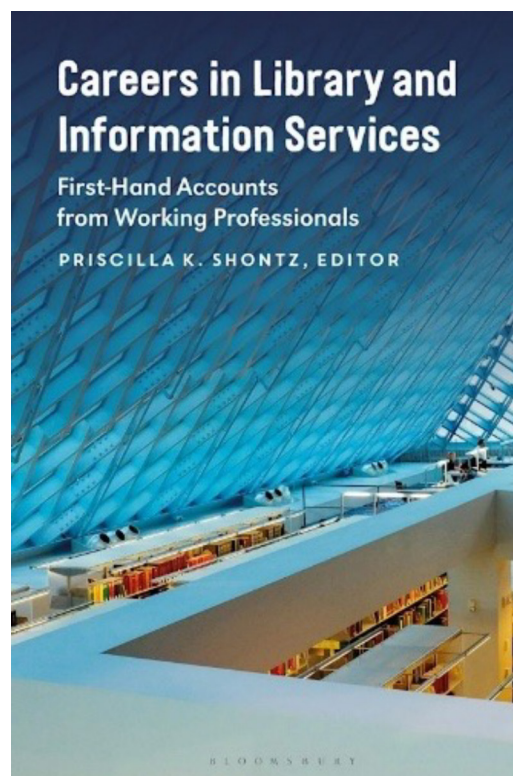


Nearly 20 years after publishing *A Day in the Life: Career Options in Library and Information Science*, editor Priscilla K. Shontz offers *Careers in Library and Information Services: First-Hand Accounts from Working Professionals* as a much-needed update for candidates navigating the 2020s job market. In this edited volume, scores of practitioners across the landscape offer aspiring professionals 101 profiles describing the numerous opportunities our field offers. In the informal style of a fireside chat, contributors provide overviews of their positions; discuss the most enjoyable and demanding parts of their jobs, their professional trajectories, and surprising aspects about their roles or the profession; offer advice to anyone interested in their respective lines of work; and share any final thoughts not already covered.

Contributions are organized thematically into five main occupational sections: 1. Public Libraries; 2. School Libraries; 3. Academic Libraries; 4. Special Libraries; and 5. Beyond the Library (i.e., information careers adjacent to librarianship). Within each section, practitioners' entries are further organized alphabetically by job titles. This ease of navigation enables readers to effortlessly locate positions they are interested in learning more about. Between the conversational prose and straightforward layout, users will find this volume an engaging and accessible read.

The greatest strength of *Careers in Library and Information Services* is its reflection of the diverse opportunities that exist across the sector. In addition to demonstrating various career paths within librarianship and archival work, the book features 30 adjacent information roles, ranging from consulting and consortium work to digital asset management and fundraising. Even longtime practitioners may be surprised to learn about unconventional possibilities in areas like competitive intelligence. Collectively, the authors of the "Beyond the Library" section thoroughly discredit the common misconception that the library degree only opens doors to careers in libraries and archives.

Despite the number of contributors representing different backgrounds and walks of life, common themes emerge. Besides their shared passion for connecting patrons to information, practitioners frequently describe how their professional goals evolved during library school, suggest that skills gained in previous jobs are transferable to the field, emphasize the importance of networking for career advancement, and exhort future colleagues to embrace self-care and guard against burnout. While aspiring



professionals are the intended audience, early career practitioners will benefit from reading the book as well.

Conversely, this edited volume demonstrates that the profession is far from monolithic. As with any group of people, information services practitioners often hold conflicting opinions and perspectives. Beliefs regarding the ease of transitioning to another area within the field aptly illustrate this point. Library Development Consultant Reagen A. Thalacker (Special Libraries), for instance, was surprised to find that the “longer you’re in an area of librarianship, the harder it is to shift to something else” (p. 208). Learning and Training Manager Shanna Hollich (Beyond the Library), however, disagrees: “I have heard many librarians over the years talk about how difficult it is to transition from one type of library to another, or even from one type of library work to another. I have never found this to be the case” (p. 318).

Arguably the most insightful and sobering aspect of the work is its largely critical assessment of library school programs’ effectiveness in training aspiring practitioners. While some contributors state that their respective programs adequately prepared them for working in the field, many more (at least 15) suggest that this was not their experience. Adult and Teen Librarian Zack North (Public Libraries), for example, believes that his previous experience in residence life better equipped him for his career than his MLIS did. Likewise, Electronic Resource Management Librarian Lucy Campbell (Academic Libraries) warns interested readers that for her line of work, “the curve is steep coming out of the MLIS degree” (p. 117). And most damning of all was one seasoned veteran’s advice to Children’s Librarian Yesenia Villar (Public Libraries) as she embarked on her career: “Forget all that shit you learned in library school” (p. 16). While these commentaries will come as no surprise to many practitioners, library school administrators and professors would do well to reflect on the volume’s generally unflattering evaluation of LIS education in North America and reform their curricula to better align with the practical needs of the profession they are meant to serve.

One criticism of the work is that the biographical sketches for all contributors are listed in a separate concluding section. This is standard practice for library and information science volumes with multiple authors; however, given the sheer number involved in this publication, frequently flipping back and forth proves tiresome. The editor would have better served users by prefacing practitioners’ contributions with these sketches throughout the book for a more enjoyable experience.

This minor critique notwithstanding, *Careers in Library and Information Services: First-Hand Accounts from Working Professionals* is a welcome addition to the literature. While libraries serving ALA-accredited library and information science programs are the most likely to acquire this work for their collections, all academic libraries are encouraged to offer and recommend this resource to dedicated student workers who demonstrate promise as potential information services professionals.

— A. Blake Denton, *Collection Management Librarian, University of Southern Mississippi*

References

Shontz, P. K., & Murray, R. A. (Eds.) (2007). *A day in the life: Career options in library and information science*. Libraries Unlimited.