

Book Reviews

Hicks, A., Lloyd, A. & O. Pilerot (Eds.) (2024).
Information Literacy Through Theory.
Facet Publishing.

Practitioner literature, where those “in the trenches” record the experience of their professional roles, makes up the plurality of scholarly literature in Library and Information Science (LIS). Less represented is theoretical literature, where high-level abstractions used to structure research perspectives are investigated and developed. While practitioner literature offers guidance and contributes to professional culture across the field, the relative neglect of theoretical literature can leave researchers and practitioners with only easy-to-hand notions to direct their work. This lack of theory can be especially felt in the pursuit of information literacy, where the political charge of the information literacy movement leaves only cursory answers to basic questions like “what is information literacy?” and “how is information literacy learned?” These questions, far from being purely academic, structure the foundation of our work.

Information Literacy Through Theory offers a panoramic view of the theories in force in contemporary information literacy research, especially in how they relate to a building consensus defining information literacy as social practices shared in specific contexts as opposed to a discrete and universal skillset. Each of its 13 chapters introduces a distinct information literacy theory and theoretically-grounded approaches to research — accessible to the unfamiliar without losing the theory’s rich detail. In lieu of organized chapter sections, the editors bookend the volume with reflections on the themes that reach across the chapters — this horizontal structure promotes generative connections between the

various theories. Preeminent LIS professionals contribute to this collection, which represents the state of the art in information literacy research.

Because of the stark contrast of perspectives each chapter presents, it’s worth highlighting particular examples. Chapter 4, written by Arthur Coelho Bezerra and Marco Schneider, outlines Brazilian studies on critical information literacy and its theoretically informed praxis. The transcontinental developments of critical information literacy have turned the individually constrained perspective of information literacy towards “the emancipation of society as a whole (p. 57).” While it may be familiar across academic librarianship through the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, less familiar are the Marxist influences in Freire’s work. Reflecting on the “radioactive” Marx’s contributions to the radical Freire, the chapter calls for the theoretical enrichment of information literacy.

Looking at information literacy through an equity mindset, Amanda L. Folk’s contribution in Chapter 8 effectively overviews an orientation to information literacy that addresses historic and ongoing sources of inequality present in information systems and educational institutions. Research in information literacy that follows from this orientation brings into focus the “contact zones” between privileged and marginalized identities that establish social conditions where learning is inequitably painful and exhausting for students. This research can empower practitioners to reformulate their institutions rather than try to “fix” students.

The final chapter by editor Ola Pilerot features institutional ethnography as an effective and robust method of information literacy research. In recognition of both the local institutional contexts

of specific social practices and the influential force of trans-local institutions across massive and distributed social groups (for instance, professional librarianship and its influence at individual libraries), institutional ethnography provides a research perspective that captures information literacy at multiple scales simultaneously. The theoretical structure underlying institutional ethnography allows the specificity of practices as they are performed to shape our understanding of information literacy practices writ large.

These three chapters, along with the rest of the book, exemplify theoretical knowledge offering structure and motive force to researchers and practitioners in equal measure. Theory and practice, as these chapters prove, are best realized when each draw upon the other.

Reviewed by Jon Schoenfelder, Assistant Professor and Instructional Services Librarian, Lycoming College.

Wintermute, H.E., Campbell, H.M., Dieckman, C.S., Rose, N.L., & Thulsidhos, H. (2024). *The DEI Metadata Handbook: A Guide to Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive Description*. Iowa State University Digital Press.
<https://doi.org/10.31274/isudp.2024.153>

The DEI Metadata Handbook breaks down the basic concepts of diverse, equitable, and inclusive description in an easy-to-read primer. The chapters are split up into major metadata work: name authorities, persons and groups, classification, and subject headings, along with chapters on inclusive description and accessibility.

Each chapter provides an overview of the topic before diving into how it was handled in the past and how it is being handled today. It shows how to work within the standard systems, such as revamping the Dewey 200s to better include all religions, or to choose an alternative option, such as using the Brian Deer Classification system. There are also examples and cases of practical work, either done by the authors or other librarians. The end of each chapter includes a list and URLs of the resources mentioned.

The authors, H. E. Wintermute, Heather M. Campbell, Christopher S. Dieckman, Nausicaa L. Rose, and Hema Thulsidhos, show a clear respect for workers and the communities they serve. The focus is on doing work that will have the most impact on the institutions' patrons and the idea that incremental change can be as impactful as major change. A brief section in chapter one discusses how to outreach with community members to assure the work the institution does best reflects the communities' lived experience. Inclusive description additions range from small—creating a harmful language statement—to more complex—identifying harmful or biased language that needs to be redacted, edited, annotated, or access restricted.

Its slim size (ninety-six pages), short chapters, and clear themes allow readers to read each chapter as a standalone. This is helpful to a busy

librarian who may not have as much dedicated time to do research on this topic. For librarians who have more knowledge, the list of resources is the most beneficial and can aid in new inclusive description work. The book is also open access, allowing institutions or individuals with limited funds access to information on inclusive description.

While this book is not without its plentiful examples and resources, it does skew towards academic libraries. Most of the examples are from academic libraries and suggest inclusive description within the context of MARC 21, Library of Congress Classification (LCC), and Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSHs). A few chapters do include examples or references to BIBFRAME, Metadata Objective Descriptive Schema (MODS), Dublin Core and other metadata schema, controlled vocabulary, and classifications. Librarians who do not use these may have to search for their own examples or reference points.

DEI work has been at the forefront for much of the discussion in the last five years in libraries, with metadata and cataloging being no exception. This book allows librarians to tackle this work in a practical, ethical way; while still acknowledging the varied limitations that institutions experience.

This book is best for students, early-career librarians, and those new to inclusive description.

Reviewed by B.L. Hendrickson, Cataloging Librarian and Assistant Professor, Pittsburg State University.

Jackson, A. P., DeLoach, M. L., & Fenton, M. (Eds.). (2024). *Handbook of Black Librarianship*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Incorporated.

Handbook of Black Librarianship (3rd Edition) is a powerful and timely collection that brings together history, personal testimony, and institutional critique to examine Black librarianship's past, present, and future in the United States. Building on the legacy of E. J. Josey and other trailblazers, this updated volume does not just revisit past contributions—it demands a reckoning with the systems that continue to marginalize Black professionals in library and information science (LIS).

The book's central message is clear: despite decades of advocacy and policy work, the profession remains profoundly unequal. Black librarians—and BIPOC librarians more broadly—continue to face exclusion, underrepresentation, and workplace toxicity. The editors spotlight this contradiction with striking statistics: while BIPOC individuals make up around 40% of the U.S. population, they account for just 13.9% of credentialed librarians. This gap is not simply a reflection of pipeline issues; it reveals deeper structural barriers that persist across generations.

The volume is most substantial when it weaves historical context and personal experience together. For example, it pairs archival material about early training programs for Black librarians, like Thomas Fountain Blue's 1912 apprenticeship program, with current-day accounts of burnout and microaggressions. These juxtapositions show how much has changed, and how much has not.

A particularly compelling thread in the handbook critiques how many equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives fall short. Instead of creating real opportunities, some programs—such as ALA's Emerging Leaders or ACRL's Diversity Alliance—are framed as competitive and unsustainable. For example, the

number of institutions participating in the Diversity Alliance dropped from 58 to just 19, raising questions about long-term commitment. The contributors argue that these programs often serve institutions more than individuals. They also push back on "resilience" narratives, with Piper (2024) reflecting on difficulties during their residency librarian experience that "I despise the concept of 'resiliency.' Proper mentorship from the jump... would have shortened my stay (89). Such moments reveal how the profession's failure to support its Black members entirely can cause lasting harm.

Perhaps the handbook's most radical and exciting aspect is how it redefines librarianship itself. The contributors argue that Black communities have long built their own knowledge systems—well before LIS became a formal discipline. From mutual aid societies to the information hierarchies of the queer ballroom scene, the book urges LIS professionals to look beyond traditional institutions and recognize the sophisticated, often overlooked frameworks created by marginalized communities. This shift in perspective invites librarians to act less like gatekeepers and more like collaborators and learners. On this subject, Aminou (2024) notes in their chapter, "We must look outside institutions and work with organizers and activists" (125).

This book will resonate with a wide range of readers. For library administrators and EDI leaders, it provides sobering critiques and guidance for real change, not just symbolic gestures. For early-career librarians, particularly those from historically excluded backgrounds, it validates lived experiences and warns of everyday challenges. It is also highly relevant to education, information studies, and social justice scholars examining why diversity initiatives often fall short.

While the book is rich in analysis and personal insight, some readers may wish for more specific roadmaps. The calls for multi pronged approaches and organizational restructuring are compelling, but practical examples and implementation case studies would strengthen

the argument. The proposed restructuring of the American Library Association (ALA), for example, is bold, but it would benefit from models or scenarios that help readers imagine what such a transformation could realistically look like.

Handbook of Black Librarianship is more than a reference—it is a call to action. It honors the work of past leaders like E. J. Josey and Carla Hayden while pushing the field to live up to its professed values. The volume challenges the idea that slow progress is enough, offers a community-led, historically informed vision of librarianship, and is boldly future-facing. This book belongs not just on LIS syllabi but also in strategic planning conversations, diversity training, and curriculum design meetings. It reminds us that real equity requires more than statements—it requires systems change.

References

Piper, G. (2024). "A Black Alt-Ac Speaks: Early Career Librarianship Trauma". In Jackson, A. P., DeLoach, M. L., & Fenton, M. (Eds.) *Handbook of Black Librarianship*, 3rd edition. (pp. 86-91). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Incorporated.

Aminu, A. (2024). "Know Your History: Information Organization in Ballroom Culture and the Potential for Librarianship". In Jackson, A. P., DeLoach, M. L., & Fenton, M. (Eds.) *Handbook of Black Librarianship*, 3rd edition. (pp. 125-128) Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Incorporated.

Reviewed by Caelin Ross, Performing Arts Librarian, Arizona State University.

Shaw, M. K. (2024). *Cataloging Library Resources: An Introduction* (2nd ed.). Rowman and Littlefield.

Technical services departments in libraries are undergoing rapid changes. Cuts to funding at the federal, state, and local levels have strained the budgets of all types of libraries, leading directors to consider the difficult decision of reducing staffing levels. Rather than hire a professional cataloger with a master's in library and information science, libraries may find it cost-effective to hire a non-professional support staff member to perform this same role. However, despite budget cuts, it remains essential for libraries to have talented individuals, professional or not, trained to precisely execute cataloging processes that are both specific to the local institution and necessary for library patrons to easily find the physical and digital resources that meet their information needs. It is this gap in cataloging literature with which *Cataloging Library Resources: An Introduction* fills.

Cataloging Library Resources: An Introduction, 2nd edition (2024) by Marie Keen Shaw is a welcome addition to the literature on learning the basics of cataloging. As a part of the Library Support Staff Handbook series, the contents of this volume meet the required competencies of the American Library Association-Allied Professional Association (ALA-APA) Library Support Staff Certification (LSSC). The ALA-APA LSSC core competencies, as well as key terms relevant to each chapter, appear at the introduction of the text, supporting the goal of the author whereby readers should learn "...many different aspects of the cataloging process...and the skills they should be able to perform to create full bibliographic MARC and item records that meet the highest standards" (p. xiv).

The text itself is divided into three parts. Part I, "Fundamentals of the Cataloging Process," is an overview of the basic elements of cataloging with which support staff should be familiar, including an overview of cataloging and classification today (chapter 1); types of library catalogs,

consortia, and organizations relevant to the cataloger (chapter 2); authority control (chapter 3); MARC 21 records (chapter 4); copy cataloging (chapter 5); and metadata (chapter 6). Part II, "Classification of Library Materials," introduces the reader to the organization of library resources using Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) (chapter 7), Library of Congress Classification (LCC) (chapter 8), and subject classification (chapter 9). Finally, Part III, "Cataloging Library Materials," explains the relationship between the cataloging standards of Resource Description and Access (RDA), Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR), and Functional Requirements for Authority Data (FRAD) (chapter 10) and, as an update to the second edition, introduces where the future of cataloging is heading, such as the transition from and conversion of MARC 21 records to BIBFRAME (chapter 11). Chapter twelve in this section offers readers the chance to practice creating MARC 21 records for different types of resources with seven cataloging exercises.

In the preface, Shaw notes the topics covered in this volume are intended to impart practical knowledge and skills to the reader. As such, each chapter is more of an overview rather than offering in-depth theoretical discussion. The seasoned cataloger or the library professional seeking a comprehensive treatment of cataloging topics should look elsewhere. The broad nature in which the author covers the subjects in the text lends itself to certain weaknesses, particularly in Part II, "Classification of Library Materials." While the text provides a good introduction to DDC and LCC, readers would benefit from supplemental practice, either hands-on or from an online program, to become fully comfortable with using and applying call numbers to library resources. Additionally, each chapter concludes with a series of discussion questions and activities for students to practice what they learned. If intending to use the activities from the textbook in the classroom, instructors should proceed with caution. As of writing this review, a few of the web pages used are no longer available.

Despite minute drawbacks, *Cataloging Library Resources: An Introduction* is highly recommended. Using clear, easy-to-understand language, Shaw does not assume prior knowledge on behalf of the reader but writes in a manner where chapters may be read sequentially or on their own. This text will find the most use as an essential text to support courses in Associate-level programs for library and information science at technical and community colleges. However, the appeal of the text reaches far beyond degree-seeking students. In both academic and public library settings, catalogers who are seeking a refresher on various cataloging topics and library staff who suddenly find themselves with cataloging responsibilities due to staffing shifts will find this volume an excellent resource.

Reviewed by Rachel Rabas, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College.
