Book Reviews

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Virtual Technical Services: A Handbook. By Mary Beth Weber and Melissa De Fino. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022. 166 p. $45.00 paperback (ISBN 978-1-5381-5263-8); $90.00 hardback (ISBN 978-1-5381-5262-1).

If you are looking for a book that practically promotes and elegantly advocates for library technical services employees undertaking remote or hybrid work into the future, look no further. Reading Mary Beth Weber and Melissa De Fino's *Virtual Technical Services: A Handbook* brings up a lot of memories and emotions from working as a technical services librarian employed throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic and at the epicenter of the 2020 uprisings. However, the scope of the book is much broader than that, touching on past crises (e.g., Hurricane Sandy, 9/11) and preparing for future crises. But as the authors stress throughout the work, lessons learned during this period have value into the future: "We learned that remote work is not necessarily limited to emergencies. Restructuring technical services around remote or hybrid schedules has potential benefits for the future of our work overall" (2). Supervisors and managers organizing and assigning this remote work—as well as technical services workers looking for ways to advocate for themselves, their coworkers, and evolve their workflows to the new mid-pandemic reality—will all benefit from reading this book. The authors examine the history of remote and hybrid work for technical services workers, up until the present day's new staffing models and outsourcing needs. True to its subtitle, this work is intended to be used very much as a "how to." This book is full to the brim with best practices and guidance for library managers in creating and following through with disaster, emergency, continuity of operations, or resumption plans for their technical services departments. The generous bibliography is organized by topic and lists numerous resources for future readers and department leaders to dig into as far as guidance for disaster planning, self-care during crisis, and climate change.

The first chapter highlights creating a departmental virtual work plan including setting up communication channels, meeting staff's remote work technology needs, tracking equipment lent or borrowed, assigning appropriate projects for remote work, and developing a customized risk profile.

The objectives of this chapter speak very much to the handbook's nature. Outlining, creating, and sharing a plan for remote work ideally starts before the remote work takes place.

In the second chapter readers are introduced to best practices regarding organizing, undertaking, and tracking remote work. Weber and De Fino summarize this experience as: "We adapted and thrived. Mistakes were made, but we also learned a great deal and found better ways to do things that were an improvement over how things had previously been done" (43). The authors break down processing physical materials, collection development and acquisitions work, electronic resources workflows, and database cleanup into practical steps that can be undertaken remotely. They also give pointers for creating employee schedules, maintaining productivity, and emphasizing how remote work can make a more sustainable future for technical services as a whole.

The next chapter, "Well-Being," addresses burnout, the self-care needed to treat and prevent burnout, and how our understanding of burnout has changed over the last few years. Weber and De Fino not only define burnout and give recommendations on avoiding it, they also connect back to the numerous literature reviews, original research, and surveys done in libraries on this topic with special emphasis on practical application during unprecedented circumstances for technical services workers. As our hemispheres of work- and home-life became fused together, it became more important than ever to maintain our physical, mental, and emotional health.

Most managers will find this next chapter at the very heart of the matter as it gives a firm basis for remote and hybrid work being incorporated into technical services work in a sustainable and thoughtful way. The fourth chapter is on the management of remote technical services operations and resources for managing remote employees. Topics covered include best practices for video conferencing, communicating and setting performance expectations, check-ins and feedback from remote staff, and how to conduct performance

appraisals and evaluations virtually. This section ends with a robust narrative of returning to work protocols that can be tailored for use at the reader's own library.

As we all know by now, it will never be possible to return to the "old normal," and quite frankly, there are not many of us willing or wanting to do so. The authors now ask that same question: "what happens next and where do we grow from here?" This next chapter looks at resumption of operations and returning to the workplace holistically with an eye towards future extreme weather events or social unrest that could cause damage to library buildings or cause technical services staff to be displaced for long periods of time. The authors lay out preparations for creating and executing a resumption plan with safety precautions, staff safety considerations, respect for employee accommodations in returning to work, calculating departmental occupancy limits, and addressing technology support for returning borrowed equipment.

In conclusion, the book serves as a strong argument and justification for the continuation of remote and hybrid technical services work into the future by examining, taking apart, and dismantling the fallacy that technical services is "stereotypically viewed as an onsite, backroom operation located in some dark and dusty corner of the library staffed by individuals who have inboxes piled high with print invoices and book trucks jammed with books waiting to be cataloged" (5). If one day in the very far future—and by some miracle—the events of 2020–2022 feel like a dream to us, this book will also serve as a heavy reminder of the realities and incredible challenges we faced to still get resources into our patrons' hands, describe resources with metadata, and preserve our collections during a period when the entire world seemed to be falling to pieces around us. But instead, the authors end on a hopeful note: that what we learned during the 2020–2022 period will serve us well as we adapt to future changes in the world, our communities, our libraries, the information profession at large, technical services work, the adoption of new technologies, and perhaps, how future pandemics might be handled or averted. They conclude, "For many of us, staying home helped us to see harsh realities that had long been ignored" (123). It is this reviewer's dearest hope that we do not forget the lessons of 2020 and continue to be our neighbors' and our coworkers' keeper. May we continue to steward one another's value and well-being just as rigorously as we steward the collections we purchase, describe, and conserve for the future.—*kalan Knudson Davis (kkdavis@umn.edu), University of Minnesota*

The Special Collections Handbook, Third Edition. By Alison Cullingford. London: Facet, 2022. 430 p. $93.99 paperback (ISBN 978-1-78330-537-7).

Considering how many materials and formats can fall under the rubric of "special collections," it seems like a daunting endeavor to compile a single handbook which covers all their management and care, but Alison Cullingford has done so with great finesse. The book is patently a product of its time: in the introduction the author addresses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and how "the rapid digital pivot or shift meant remote access to collections and metadata became more important than ever, for staff and users" (xix). In addition, the "voices for Black Lives Matter" have made the special collections community reexamine practices where "Special Collections have been shaped by legacies of empire, colonialism and slavery" (xix). Throughout the text the impact of this zeitgeist can be seen.

The author has arranged the book into four parts: "Discovering Collections," "Collection Management," "Managing Public Access," and "Governance and Resources for Special Collections." Of all the parts, the first part is most likely the weakest. It is essentially a lightning-quick introduction to the history of the book and book making and then an enumeration of the kind of materials you might also find in a special collection (artists' books, ephemera, audio/visual/digital media, music, maps, and realia). The reader comes away feeling that so little was said about so much. The chapters in other parts are much stronger, but the part division itself seems a bit arbitrary at times with some overlap of the parts (for example, the marketing chapter in part 3 could easily have gone into part 4 instead).

Nevertheless, the content of each chapter is quite good for the most part with each chapter defining terminology, introducing the major topics of the subject, presenting best practices, and offering up further readings and useful websites at the end of the chapter. In terms of the quality of the content, some chapters are better than others. The chapters on emergency planning, user services, and marketing were very strong. In fact, chapter 9 ("Marketing and Communications in Special Collections") was quite brilliant and offered up insights that can only be garnered through years of experience using social media to effectively promote one's collection. The author rightly and eloquently stresses marketing's importance:

> Librarians sometimes worry that marketing will lead to an increase in use, which is a concern if services struggle with existing demand. However, good quality communication means better informed Special Collections users who need less individual attention. Increased use helps librarians acquire funding and