Sources
Professional Materials

Calantha Tillotson, Editor

Beyond Reality: Augmented, Virtual, and Mixed Reality in the Library. Edited by Kenneth J. Varnum. Chicago: ALA, 2019. 144 p. Paper $64.99 (ISBN 978-0-8389-1785-5).

As part of the democratization of information, libraries are expanding their offerings beyond knowledge-based resources into the realm of virtual reality. In *Beyond Reality*, Varnum produces nine unique chapters on augmented, virtual, and mixed realities (AR/VR/MR). Six of the chapters are university case studies, two are from public libraries, and the final chapter is from an intellectual property attorney. The selected case studies offer a variety of geographic locations and sizes, which will help match libraries considering pursuing AR/VR/MR programs.

One prominent theme from the case studies is funding. With library budgets tight, several chapters explain how libraries acquired necessary funds for starting virtual reality initiatives. For example, the University of Utah used student computing fees and university grant funding to purchase their VR tools, and Kutztown University created a dedicated line in the library's acquisition budget (p. 49, 59). In addition, the University of Oklahoma library administration recognizes the VR project "as critical to maintaining the OU Libraries' position as the technological and intellectual crossroads of the University," resulting in financial support for the VR efforts (p. 71).

A second theme from the case studies includes how librarians can support newly created virtual reality programs. For example, librarians at the University of St. Francis posit libraries should become experts on the intersection of augmented reality technologies and user privacy, crafting VR use policies which "align with current library policies regarding technology and user privacy" (p. 106). Additional library policies addressed include preventing theft of equipment, establishing time limits, and training staff (p. 10).

An additional theme addresses the imbedding of VR technologies in future library functions. Librarians at the University of Oklahoma see the possibility of libraries helping students to "develop spatial cognition skills" that will be required in many fields (p. 79). A librarian from Kutztown University pictures a student wearing a VR headset asking where to find books on Tchaikovsky and "the walls she sees will instantly fill with signs pointing her towards the ML410 shelves" (p. 66). Lastly, with book circulation on the decline, VR headsets can attract patrons back to the library, according to librarians at the University of Utah (p. 55).

I do wonder if a book was the best resource for sharing this content. A themed journal, as opposed to a book format, would have been a better option for indexing such diverse examples of AR/VR/MR, as librarians would find the content more discoverable. Nevertheless, it is encouraging to see how different libraries are using AR/VR/MR for their patrons, and if your library is considering an AR/VR/MR program, Varnum's book is a good starting point.—*Daniel G. Kipnis, Life Sciences Librarian, Rowan University, Glassboro, New Jersey*