IJIDI: Book Review

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The library is constantly striving to work for its users, but how is it working for the people who work there? This is one of the questions that the *Library Workplace Idea Book* seeks to address. By offering some methods for improving the workplace for all workers, this book attempts to achieve a grand and noble goal. To that end, the editors present a series of 24 case studies and personal narratives, each constituting a chapter of the book. Each of these studies is presented by a library worker, or workers, at a different institution and presents one project that was undertaken for improving their library. In this context, the book has a lot to offer for libraries, especially those concerned about their workers.

As a text coming from the American Library Association, the ideas presented are couched entirely within the cultural context of the U.S. This includes discussion from legal requirements in bullying to Historically Black Colleges and Universities. It would certainly not be feasible to remove the layers of the social construct that make this text notably local in its presentation and solutions, though it would have been enlightening to see some different approaches. Even as a Canadian reading this, I found the text's worldview notably different, despite our geographic and cultural proximity.

The book begins with a large section (six chapters) on Work-Life Balance. Largely, the section refers more to better designing library workplaces for workers with new families. There is a certain sense to this, given both the profession's gender imbalance both as a whole, and in upper administrative positions. One can hope that the topic of improving the library workforce would result in senior library administrators seeking new ideas and finding ways to reduce career advancement barriers that those with family responsibilities currently experience. Still, while clearly these are issues in need of further work, I would have appreciated a more expansive view of work-life balance in a library context.

Section three of the book (six chapters) is titled "Inclusion and Sensitivity." The first chapter, by Angel Sloss, discusses sensitivity in race and ethnicity, and incisively outlines this issue in ways that should make many of us uncomfortable, in particular, with such sentiments as "I was not prepared for the constant microaggressions that I would feel in the workplace" (p. 78). The second chapter of this section then discusses creating an inclusive environment for Indigenous support staff, and in this we perhaps see further cultural differences of the U.S.: the library is not acknowledged as a colonial institution. This is abundantly clear when exploring some problematic suggestions for creating inclusive library workplaces. These include outings to an

"ethnic restaurant" (p. 88) and having interested staff "share information about their heritage or hobbies" (p. 88), without discussing the extra workload this can put on those staff members; and ultimately, the chapter title, "Indigenous Support Staff in the Library," focuses specifically on Indigenous support staff, rather than Indigenous staff as a whole. While there are some excellent ideas presented, the subtext of this section, including the assumed whiteness of the profession, is problematic.

Two chapters on gender identity and inclusion, also part of the "Inclusion and Sensitivity" section, are valuable in continuing the conversation around something that remains difficult for some members of society to understand and embrace. The chapters provide two differing stories in this vein, with the first outlining the minor successes and deeper frustrations of enacting change, while the second shows a greater workplace uptake and deeper work to improve equity outside of gender binary-identifying individuals. In this instance, the "Inclusion and Sensitivity" section was excellent.

Much of the advice in the book is deeply contingent on a very fundamental principle: that library administrators are highly (and sincerely) engaged in creating an inclusive workplace and that they are willing to take action to ensure this goal is achieved. This is evident in Chapter 14: "Organizational Change and Gender Identity: When Good Intentions Fall Short," by Alex Byrne. This chapter focuses more on the role of management in encouraging and following through on change. Byrne writes, "managers and supervisors are a crucial part of organizational change" (p. 93). In other chapters of the book, such quotes as "ongoing and explicit supervisory support and encouragement is essential…" (p. 67) and "we are grateful to our university librarian for her responsiveness to staff concerns…" (p. 32) outline the primary need for institutional, and in particular administrative, support before undertaking any project. While many of the ideas are excellent ones to implement for improving the workplace, nearly all of them are deeply contingent on support from administrators, which is not always guaranteed. More than this, some suggestions call for significant financial or space commitments—or in some cases both—which may be a particularly difficult sell for administrators looking to create student study space and cut costs. The ideas presented in this text are grand but may also illuminate the financial and ideological disparities between institutions and geographies; for example, a well-funded, geographically isolated institution may be more likely to work on employee retention than one in a major urban centre.

Notably missing in the discussion is perspectives or ideas from and for individuals with disabilities. The closest reference to persons with disabilities is part of a mention of mental health, however this is in the context of the improvements brought about by exercise programs such as walking and yoga. The chapters on inclusion specifically mention race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, however ability is either part of a list (in the case of one chapter offering a model code of conduct) or as an add-on, reminding readers to " be mindful of including people with varying levels of ability" (p. 67). More in-depth treatment of library workers with disabilities would have been welcomed.

There are some excellent ideas to bring into libraries presented in this book. While many of those ideas are highly dependent on local, social, cultural, and economic mores and abilities, the book can serve as a jumping point for adaptation, and certainly would make excellent reading for administrators looking to improve the working culture for their staff. While not perfect, it has much to offer, and I would recommend it for library staff uncertain of where to start when looking for new workplace improvement projects.

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