Reviews

Ethics is generally understood to be concerned with questions about morality, about right and wrong, good and bad. Of course, such questions cannot be considered separately from one's beliefs, values and actions. Consequently ethics involves both theoretical and practical dimensions, involving investigatory processes of thinking and choosing along with practical processes of knowing and doing. The complexity of what constitutes a moral life has occupied philosophers throughout the ages, and filled the pages of countless books, so I was intrigued to find out how this book (no more than about 100 spaciously organised pages) meets the challenge of its title within the context of curriculum practice.

In fact, it does so, very ably, in an extremely purposeful and comprehensive manner based on the authors' intention to empower students with both practical and theoretical "knowledge, skills and dispositions to make well-informed and reasoned moral choices". Could there be a nobler, or more worthwhile, goal than acquainting children/students with an ethical perspective on the world? In their 'Final Thoughts' at the close of this text, the authors (all five are classroom teachers) express their conviction that to bring this extra dimension to curriculum is indeed a role teachers should be willing to undertake.

Introductory chapters (One and Two) outline frameworks that underpin the processes of ethical decision-making within a classroom model of a 'Community of Inquiry'. Key to these is 'PAVE', the critical thinking strategy that requires students to find mutual agreement through careful consideration and discussion to determine which principles they deem to be guiding standards for a moral life, what the end-consequences of any proposed actions are likely to be and which character traits are valued as virtuous in terms of an ethical life.

Following chapters (Three to Eight) use a variety of curriculum case-study units to show how it is possible to generate ethical components through analysis of subject content and by activating different methods: critical literacy in story-telling, statistics in ethical decision-making, active listening and role playing, active citizenship in society and environment programs. Each exemplar illustrates a different application of specific thinking skills and approaches for moral reasoning. All are designed to enrich students' reasoning powers, to both clarify and justify the act of taking a moral stance within – and beyond the classroom. For the practical purposes of teachers, all chapters provide helpful preparatory notes and ideas about this process as well as lesson plans and replicable Resource Sheets for use in the classroom.

I believe the book more than meets the challenge of its title and that its authors have certainly provided stimulating ground for those who would tackle the task of injecting ethics into curriculum. I note, however, that while I was impressed by the skilful efficiency with which the frameworks combine elements of Aristotelian and Platonic ethics ('practical wisdom', 'virtue ethics' and 'human flourishing') with those of Kantian reasoning and Utilitarian consequentialism, this lineage is not acknowledged in the text or in the References. I mention this, only as a comment, because, given the cultural diversity of our student population, I also think it is worth noting the singularly Eurocentric cultural basis of the authors' chosen approach. Nevertheless, I cannot deny that the intention of this project and its purpose proposes a worthy basis for an equitable and caring society.

The slender format of this valuable text belies the richness of its content and the larger vision of its purpose to encourage "Active citizenship, where individuals have a voice for themselves and an ear for others' rights within the community". Teacher-librarians – recommend it to your curriculum specialists and your teacher colleagues!

Reviewed by Dr Susan Boyce,
Member of the Synergy *Board*

Graphic Novels in Your School Library
Karp, Jesse and illustrated by Rush Kress (2011)
Chicago, IL: American Library Association (ALA)
146 pages
ISBN 978-0-8389-1089-4
Available from: www.alastore.ala.org
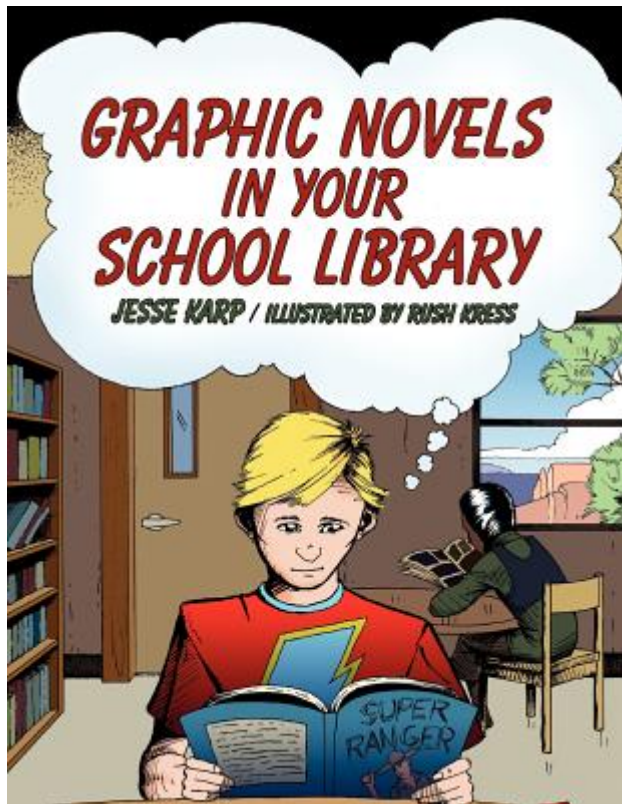
Graphic Novels in Your School Library discusses the educational potential of the graphic novel. The author, Jesse Karp, introduces the history, the symbols and conventions of this format, followed by the ways graphic novels can be used in the library and the classroom.

Graphic novels are a format and not a genre, such as mystery, romance or science fiction. Since a graphic novel can tell a story in a number of styles or media, it is a format which is closely related to the comic book. Both comic books and graphic novels contain sequential art, a sequence of images used to express a story or

idea. If this is the link between the two, the question remains as to how the graphic novel differs from the comic book.

There are generally accepted ideas for distinguishing comics from graphic novels. Graphic novels tend to tell a full story from beginning to end, even if there is a course of several volumes, whereas comic books have an open-ended continuity. Although this is not a hard-and-fast rule, it does tend to apply. More importantly, it is the physical form which differs, whereby comic books are floppy and graphic novels are bound either as a hardcover or softcover item. Graphic novels are longer, running upward of 64 pages. Importantly "a graphic novel is a generally complete narrative told in sequential art, bound on sturdy paper without staples" (p. 6).

How do graphic novels relate to education? The format is of particular benefit to students who are "slow visualisers", students who have difficulty creating mental images from word descriptions or to "reluctant readers" who lack motivation in and enjoyment of reading. Students may be "visually dependent" and find books too slow moving and lacking in visual components to stay engaged. Graphic novels can stimulate interest, often faster than books. They can build skills, confidence and a desire to move on to other formats and to continue reading for the sake of enjoyment. Graphic novels nurture a form of visual literacy.

The text examines the nature of sequential art, that is, the images must relate in a specifically chronological and contextual way. One image must lead to the next and the next, creating a sequence. Chapter 3 examines *Manga*, the Japanese form of the comic book, meaning "disreputable pictures" or "whimsical pictures". *Manga* has great popularity, particularly in the US.

Part Two of *Graphic Novels in Your School Library* explores the history of American sequential art: *Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Archie* and *Spider-Man* among others. 1986 is considered to be the year that changed sequential art with Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, Frank Miller's *Dark Knight Returns* and Alan Moore and Dave Gibbon's superhero in *Watchmen*. Part Three contains annotated reading lists of the most enjoyable, best art and storytelling graphic novels. These lists are divided into two chapters. The first covers a broad range of themes and discussion topics for preschool to Grade 8 in Chapter 6. More complex themes are covered in the annotated reading lists, Grades 9 to 12 in Chapter 7. Annotations quickly and concisely introduce plot and characters in one or two paragraphs.

Part Four presents useful lesson plans to help incorporate graphic novels into the curriculum, library programs and discussion groups. Chapter 8 focuses on the sequential art and the way in which the form conveys narrative, theme, character and tone in a unique and powerful manner. Chapter 9 develops lessons by analysing the content of individual graphic novels. There are many history units of work, for example, Ancient History, Civil Rights, Civil War, Cold War and the Great Depression.

Graphic Novels in Your School Library is an excellent, thorough and detailed text which relates the graphic novel to teaching and learning.

Reviewed by Dr Robin Zeidler
Director of Library Services
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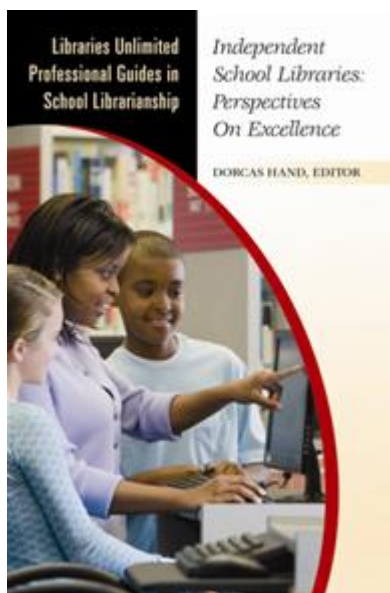
This book presents twenty-one essays written by North American librarians from independent schools. All draw on experience to share their particular insights about 'best practices' in library services for school communities. Curious to pursue these recommendations from the publisher, including 'the development of new ideas and methods', I chose to review this book with some expectation of finding evidence of radical independence, if not fresh perspectives, or visions for the future of school libraries. Notes from both the Foreword and the blurb suggest that these librarians are uniquely advantaged by their independent status which frees them from the constraints of their public school peers who are bound by the bureaucracy state and national laws. Of particular interest also is the Editor's remark, in her response to the Foreword, which informs us that this book is "the first on independent school libraries published in more than twenty years".

Where the publisher's blurb suggests the possibility of "unique opportunities to explore and refine new practices", I was somewhat disappointed. Perhaps my expectations were too optimistic. Rather than just 'refine', I was looking for 're-define', and from this perspective, the substance of the essays did not demonstrate the bold exemplars one might have hoped to find. Perhaps I should have trusted my instinctive wariness of blurbs that vaunt overworked catch cries such as 'excellence' and 'best practices'. This is not say, however, that the work of these school librarians has not moved with the times or that they have not been innovative or forward-looking. Rather, that their essays track already familiar themes conveyed, nonetheless, with exemplary thoroughness and the self-assured dedication of experienced professionals.

The spread of contributions from across the continent show that just over half the authors represent schools situated in the most densely populated states of the north-east coast, while, of the rest, four hail from California, four from Texas, one from Florida and another from New Mexico. Despite the varied representation of schools, in terms of type and size, I suspect that all contributions indicate that they are well-established schools whose libraries reflect the demographic values of their locations. Indeed, the voices of their librarians project strongly traditional values and dedicated allegiance to time-honoured principles and conventions underpinning the service of school librarianship.

Rather than providing exploration or discussion of future trending, the essays offer detailed, well intended, advisory information, sometimes in rather prosaic ways. The scope of their themes can be collapsed broadly into the following aspects: advocacy; management; staffing – statistical profiling and analysis; staffing – accreditation, accountability and professional evaluation; dedicated service and enhanced access; student learning as mission; literacy; integration of electronic and digital media; censorship and selection policy; leadership and innovation within the school community; collaboration and the formation of useful allegiances within and beyond the school community; library as information commons – one chapter and one further mention in another; and disaster planning. All of these, except maybe the last, are more than familiar – even at the time of publication. And of these, the ever-present need for ADVOCACY always hovers, reflecting the profession's deeply felt, anxious preoccupation with self-justification.

Throughout, the authors make frequent reference to professional support and guidelines provided by the Association of Independent School Librarians, the American Association of School Librarians (including the

Independent School Section of the AASL), the American Library Association, the National Association of Independent Schools, the Association of College and Research libraries, as well as further state and national educational resources. Even though these librarians may be free to work outside the mandates of state and national regulations, their work is clearly influenced and shaped by these professional standards and benchmarks.

The essays are accompanied by: Appendices: A NAIS Guidelines of Professional Practice for Librarians, and B: charts for Librarian's Performance Assessment, as well as an Index to both the text and appendices. I felt that the breadth and scope of this well-edited collection provides a thoroughly substantial and proficient overview of the profession of school librarianship – as it might be practised in both public and private spheres. But, rather than rousing the reader with startling concepts, it confirms the status quo.

Reviewed by Dr Susan Boyce,
Member of the Synergy *Board*

The Readers' Advisory Guide to Street Literature
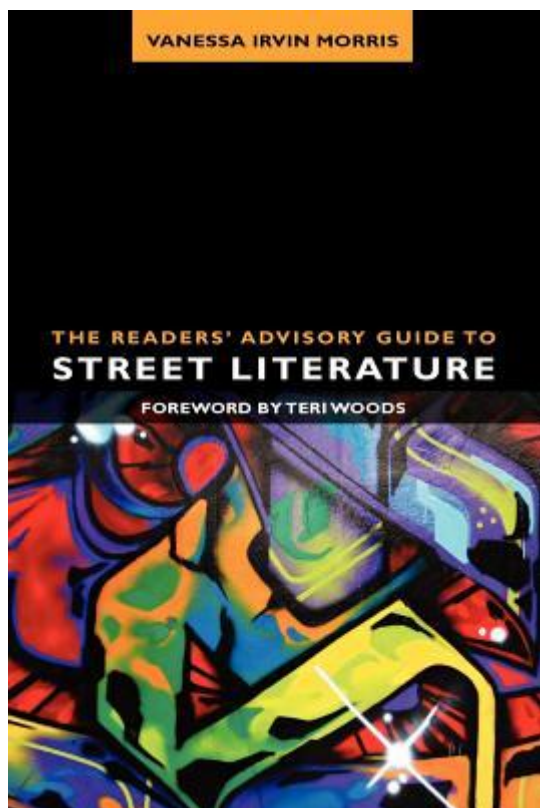Morris, Vanessa Irvin and forward by Teri Woods (2012)
Chicago, IL: American Library Association (ALA)
138 pages
ISBN 978-08389-1110-5
Available from: www.alastore.ala.org
(ALA readers' Advisory Series)

The Readers' Advisory Guide to Street Literature emphasises an appreciation for street-lit or urban fiction, a genre which addresses the concerns and problems of city living. Street-lit is a popular genre with a huge publishing business supporting it. Indeed, street-lit is seen as a way to promote reading and library use. But what is street lit? The genre focuses on the journey into inner-city life, turmoil and street drama and is often told by African and Latin Americans. Sometimes, readers refer to street-lit as 'the Black books' (p.xv). Importantly, street-lit is location specific in the inner-city, usually set in lower income city neighbourhoods.

The street-lit genre appeals to readers for many reasons, such as, enjoyment, knowledge of inner-city living and survival in such an environment. Reading street-lit may reflect the reality of living in similar settings to those of the stories and provides awareness of how to survive the streets and circumvent pitfalls and difficulties. Surviving street life and overcoming street lifestyle are definite characteristics of street-lit. Stories are often fast-paced, with flashback sequences and vivid depictions of the lack of resources, substandard housing and poverty in the inner-city environment. Contemporary street-lit is an African American-focussed genre, often written using regional dialects for a target audience. The street is seen as 'an interactive stage' in which the young adults are involved in intense relationships and identity development. Characters survive abuse, friendship betrayal and other 'fantastical' plots for revenge.

The book is targeted at teachers and librarians to encourage them to best deal with, in classrooms and libraries, what is sometimes a controversial genre. Readers have described street-lit as 'a movie in one's head' and as such, it can ignite the reading habit, especially in reluctant readers. As well as relating the rich history of the genre, The Readers' Advisory Guide to Street Literature covers the subgenres or diversity within street-lit. Always, the common central theme is navigating relationships and interpersonal conflicts within the circumstances of poverty in street life.

Other chapters deal with street-lit readers' advisory services, review resources and discuss collection development strategies and promotional ideas for this genre. The epilogue contains a candid conversation and exchange of ideas about the merits and limitations of street-lit followed by an appendix of street-lit publishers, bibliography and index.

Although street-lit is primarily an African American literature genre and perhaps, less relevant to Australian libraries, the book is a scholarly and thorough analysis of a fascinating genre. The Readers' Advisory Guide to Street Literature is clearly written and a most attractively presented and published text.

Reviewed by Dr Robin Zeidler
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Be a Great Boss: One Year to Success
Catherine Hakala-Ausperk (2011)
American Library Association (ALA)
Chicago
Series: ALA Guides for the busy librarian
215 pages, paperback
ISBN 9780838910689
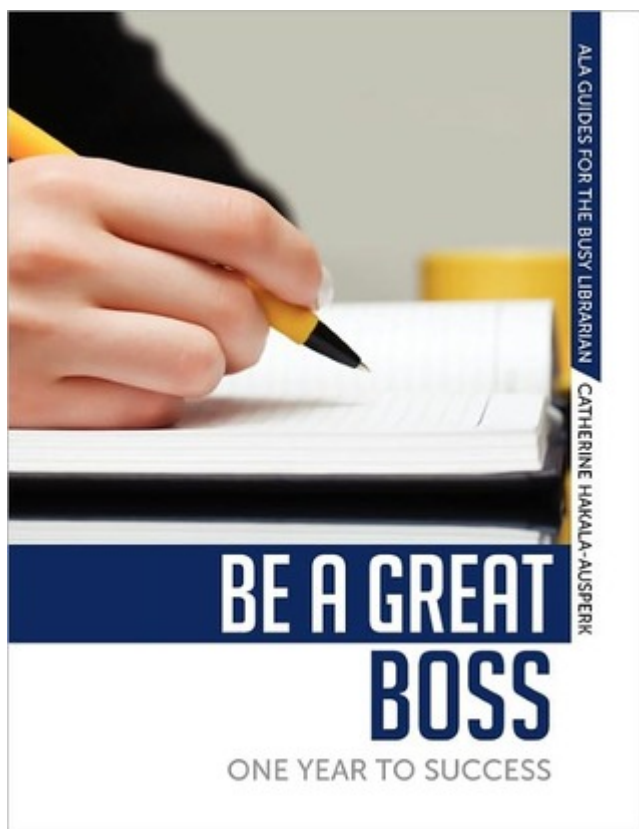
The brief and succinct preface of *Be a great boss: one year to success* engages with the reader from the outset as it acknowledges why they have chosen this text. It makes the promise to be of value to the newly promoted supervisor or director who is anxious to settle into a new job with limited time for knowledge building and external training. The friendly, accessible style of writing immediately encourages one to explore further.

From the series, ALAGuides for the busy librarian, this workbook by well-known trainer Catherine Hakala-Ausperk, is set out in a self-paced format spread over the year. It provides the reader with a framework to work through over a twelve month period by naming each of the twelve chapters as 'months' and setting out four weekly units of work within each of these months. This structure lays out a recommended study timeframe which, over the year, will cover "key issues and realities that all bosses need to know". Units of work involve only two to three pages of reading with key points arranged in tables within the text for emphasis and include suggested reading with each topic for readers wishing to investigate further.

I am particularly impressed with the reflective worksheet that accompanies each weekly unit. Personal reflection is a important component of learning and by including it within each unit, the reader has the opportunity to chart his/her growth as they progress through each month. This would be particularly useful when consolidating the learning by using the workbook as a guide for the next twelve months.

Layout aside, Be a Great Boss is a personnel management text and focuses on the management of personnel, relationships and organisational leadership. The first month is entitled 'Attitude' and immediately provides the reader with strategies for managing themselves in the new role. Chapters then work through topics such as, 'Success with stakeholders, 'Staffing', 'Communication', 'Customer service', 'Leadership' and culminates with 'Your future'. The reader develops the sensation of being led from knowing oneself, applying past experiences to the current situation, through to finally reflecting on the future.

This is not a textbook, it is a workbook. The author emphasises at the outset that the commitment of a non-negotiable one hour per week is necessary for success. She encourages the reader to establish the productive work habit of setting aside one hour per week to think, reflect and plan with the promise that "it will introduce and establish a development and learning style that will perpetuate year after year".

Recommended workbook for all newly-appointed leaders and managers, specifically library managers. Includes table of contents and bibliography.

Reviewed by Camilla Elliott
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Member of the Synergy *Board*

Literature to Support the Australia Curriculum: Annotated Lists of Fiction and Poetry
Fran Knight (2011)
Pledger Consulting
Kangarilla, SA
97 pages, paperback
ISBN 9781876678258
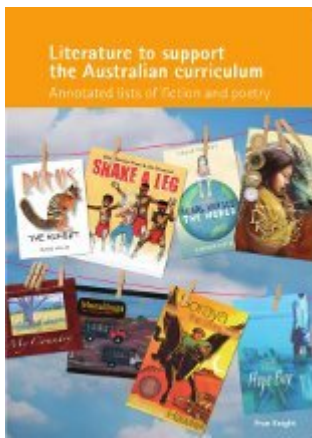
Literature to Support the Australia Curriculum: Annotated Lists of Fiction and Poetry is exactly as the title suggests, a selection of texts annotated and organised in a format to support English teachers and teacher librarians in selecting literature for study by students from Foundation to Year 10. Author Fran Knight, a renowned expert in the field of children's and adolescent literature, has applied her extensive knowledge of books and reading to create a guide that is both comprehensive and accessible.

Knight has organised texts under the headings of the Cross Curriculum Priorities, Asian Themes, Indigenous Themes and Sustainability, in addition to Poetry, Suggestions for Class Texts and Read Alouds. Within these headings, texts are further arranged into groups that constitute Beginner students, upper Primary and Secondary year levels making it very easy for the reader to go directly to a list and peruse for suitable recommendations. Descriptors of each entry are concise and explicit, enhancing the ability to distribute lists to teachers for discussion.

The aim of the literature strand of the Australian curriculum, to be reported on by the majority of schools in 2013, is "to engage students in the study of literary texts of personal, cultural an aesthetic value". Furthermore, texts studied are to "have potential for enriching lives and expanding the scope of [their] experience". The majority of texts included are contemporary novels published within recent years. They have been written for this generation of students and can be trusted to engage. Included also, however, are some traditional stories such as *The Willow Pattern Story* by Allan Drummond within Asian Themes, and *Sun on the Stubble* by Colin Thiele in the category, Sustainability. An author index also facilitates finding specific texts.

This publication is timely. It comes as English teachers review their curriculum against the requirements of the national standards and look towards the library for new ideas. Fran Knight is well known in Australian literature circles as one who can be relied upon to provide trusted recommendations. She has assembled a range of literature in this text that will be of immense assistance to teachers and teacher-librarians. Organising

within the Cross Curriculum Priorities, in addition to the traditional class texts, also assists teachers wishing to select novels to support the curriculum in subjects other than English.

Well laid out and accessible, this publication is highly recommended for all school libraries and English teachers with responsibility for text selection.

Reviewed by Camilla Elliott, Head of Library
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No Shelf Required 2: Use and Management of Electronic Books
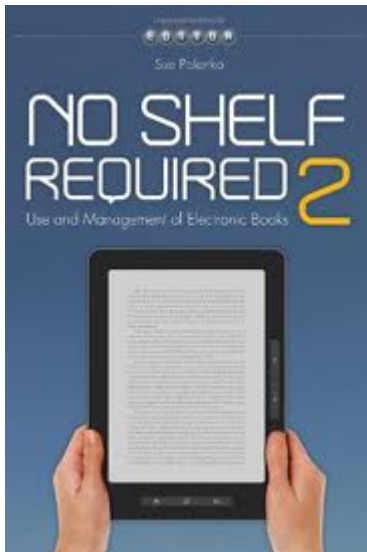Polanka, Sue (Editor) (2012)
Chicago, IL; American Library Association (ALA)
254 pages, paperback
ISBN 9780838911457
Available from: www.alastore.ala.org

Sue Polanka is the author of the No shelf required blog. This blog discusses eBook issues for librarians and publishers. The success of the blog led to publication of *No Shelf Required: eBooks in Libraries* (2011). The reviewed title is the sequel, allowing even more contemporary analysis of trends, dilemmas and perspectives regarding eBooks.

Current trends in Victoria
Devices are being assessed in trials with schools. The Victorian school iPads for Learning trial involved a number of primary and secondary schools in 2011. Resources to support the trial are now available on the site. Responses are positive, with practitioners extolling the functionality of the iPad in hooking readers, who then often request the 'real book'. Penguin's online publication *Off the Shelf* has an article describing the trial by Tye Cattanach, library co-ordinator at Manor Lakes P-12 College.

EBook libraries are also being examined. Digital library platforms have been embraced by some public libraries, which have then mentored school libraries. The partnership of Softlink with Overdrive provides Australian support to schools. This will enable users to access digital content regardless of which mobile technology is used. Joy Board's experiences are documented in her *Synergy* article' A 21st Century Digital Library - An OverDrive Experience'.

Polanka's first book, *No Shelf Required: EBooks in Libraries* (2011) introduced the history and development of eBooks, describing the technology and learning applications. *No Shelf Required 2* reviews how libraries are

incorporating and managing eBooks and devices. Sixteen chapters feature contributions from academic, school and public libraries. Appropriately, the title is available as an eBook, readable on a variety of software and devices. The reader can engage in the whole text, or choose individual chapters for research.

The work commences with a review of developments and information. Early chapters report the Amazon April 2011 report, where a reduction in prices for devices before Christmas resulted in digital book sales exceeding print sales. The multitude of issues and challenges arising from the advent of digital publishing are discussed in a number of chapters. These include licensing, the obstacles created by Digital Rights Management (DRM), format incompatibility, the fact that not all content is digitalised, and whether multimedia content should be embedded or linked. The road to standardisation looks to be a long one. A contributor notes that the advent of eBooks is the first disruptive technology to impact on the book industry since Gutenberg. One is reminded of the Youtube clip 'The first IT help-desk call' where a medieval monk struggles with the transition from the scroll to the codex.

Contributors provide experience and guidance in processes involved in cataloguing, weeding and archiving. Similarities and differences between physical and electronic texts are examined in context of a variety of library settings. The concept of the physical space known as a library is changing as collections are increasingly digitalised. A library's physical content today is only a fraction of the information available to patrons. Writers view the physical area as one defined by teaching and how it can support users to find and access learning resources, as well as collaborate. The very concept of a book has changed, and can no longer be defined exclusively by its physical nature.

Chapter 3 *Accessibility issues in eBooks and EBook readers* highlights the fact that so-called 'born digital' products are universally usable, compared to print resources which have been converted. Print-disabled patrons benefit from capabilities such as font enlargement, captioning and text to speech. Law suits arose when the Kindle 2 provided the option of voice text. The Authors' Guild in the US regarded this as a violation of copyright. Arguing that voice text was a public performance, the Guild believed that this would lessen the value of audio versions of a book. Disability groups contend that as publishers move towards standardisation, text-to-speech should be mandated.

Later chapters offer case studies in school, university and public libraries. These evaluate how eBooks have been adopted, with details of programs. The case studies, from 2009 to 2011, reveal the evolution of devices, with Kindle, Kindle 2, the Barnes & Noble product, Nook, the Sony Reader, as well as the iPad. Kindle in Australia is limited by the lack of *Whispernet,* Amazon's 3G wireless service, which in the US, can be used to browse the Internet, as well as buy books. This has resulted in Australians having to pay a higher price for eBooks.

Chapter 14 *Ereader adoption in the School Library Media Centre* provides much interesting detail. The authors begin by insisting that Ereaders must only be adopted with a specific focus on improving student learning, not because of wow! factor. Connection with curriculum frameworks is essential. The device used was the Barnes & Noble Nook, which was praised, but the writers note that the iPad touch was not then available. The project was to engage ESL and low income students with reading. Students benefited from their ability to interact with text, by highlighting and annotating, using the dictionary, as well as text-to-speech. Users found the interface intuitive, ignoring the carefully developed user guide, created by library staff. Year 7s chose between six different novels, related to a theme. The social aspect of reading was facilitated by the Ereader. Students' highlighted sentences and notes were discussed in groups, as well as on the wiki for the unit. The inaugural users created short promotional videos for other classes. Library staff did not lend the devices to students, as Wi-Fi could not be disabled. Before access, students completed an Ereader permissions and Acceptable Use Agreement form.

Chapter 16 *Using EBooks with reluctant readers* used Kindle 2. Similar benefits were found, with the ability to manipulate text promoting literacy and connection with reading. The writers made use of Larson's lesson plan published on ReadWriteThink.

Movements towards digital access have been occurring for some time, in the areas of periodicals and reference. Some university libraries have removed the majority of physical books, concentrating their service on providing support for students to choose the right digital content. The Stanford University Engineering

library features a Gadget bar, where patrons can borrow a range of Ereaders: Kindle 3, Kindle DX, Sony reader touch. These are used in-library with pre-loaded content.

Notwithstanding the irony of a physical publication about virtual books and e devices, *No Shelf Required 2*is to be highly recommended. Whether ordered as a digital or regular book, Polanka's work is valuable as an up-to-date reference for teacher-librarians. Documenting the proliferation of devices and resources leaves the reader in no doubt as to the need for consolidation of the Ereading world. Moves towards standardised publishing formats such as EPUB, and the development of PDF/UA (Universal accessibility format for PDF as a single format) will break the impasse caused by multiplicity and incompatibility of formats.

The EBook decision is critical for teacher-librarians. One-to-one computer access for students will drive the need for digital texts. The engagement and opportunities for interaction with text provided by Ereaders described in the case studies encourages teacher-librarians to work with teachers and develop their own Ereader trials.

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