

Book Review

The Top Technologies Every Librarian Needs to Know: A LITA Guide by Kenneth J. Varnum

The Top Technologies Every Librarian Needs to Know, a recent addition to The Library and Information Technology Association series of guidebooks (Varnum, 2014), is a diverse collection of edited texts aimed at preparing library professionals for a cutting-edge workplace environment. With input from fourteen scholars, this guide touches on a variety of topics ranging from Augmented Reality to open-source hardware. Although this resource contains a wide selection of topics, its units complement one another well.

The first chapter is a general introduction to important ways of thinking strategically about how libraries can incorporate themselves into an increasingly high-tech world. Chapters two and three delve into the possibilities of Augmented Reality technologies, highlighting numerous exciting possibilities including virtual stacks and library-generated geographically-fixed information guides. Chapter four covers the timely topic of cloud computing. Chapter five examines how such advances will facilitate and transform library discovery. The transformation of library websites into web services is the focus of chapter six. Chapter seven lays out ways text-mining, related to data-mining, helps academic librarians assist researchers with whom they work. Digital libraries are covered in chapter eight. Finally, chapter nine examines the new possibilities created by user-friendly and customizable hardware.

An important consideration for potential users of this guide is determining the target audience. Library professionals are a vastly diverse group of people and their technology experiences and know-how are as varied as their workplace settings. One of the book's strengths is that it caters to this diversity. Its multiple authors target their work to users at varying levels of technological competency. This creates a guide that is at once specific and comprehensive. However, the assumption in the overall majority of chapters is that the reader has fairly low level of technological education and experience. As librarianship programs increasingly focus on the instruction of technological literacy, library professionals are more able to use and digest technologically advanced educational materials. Given this development, the generalizing approach in this book suggests that it may not remain relevant long-term.

While the approach the guide takes leaves some room for improvement, the topics it covers are more promising. In the rapidly evolving world of technology, it is particularly important to evaluate the staying-power of technologically focused content. Authors and editors can employ several strategies to extend a work's useful life

including writing about emerging technologies, focusing on technologies with sustainable impacts, and by producing content at a more broad conceptual level. This guide and its individual authors employ all of these strategies. The most effective chapters in this book are those that focus on technologies in their infancies that are expected to have far reaching impacts.

Of particular note is the last chapter's focus on increasingly user-friendly hardware that enhance and augment library services. The chapter assumes high level computer literacy and discusses *Arduino* and *Raspberry Pi* which are both current and likely to remain so. This chapter provides an exciting and informative glimpse of where librarians can take their practice by fully exploiting user-centered technologies. This topic is particularly interesting as it is increasingly rare for non-specialists to encounter discussions of hardware rather than software.

Overall, this multifaceted book can be useful in a variety of contexts. It also includes suggestions and advice for a number of projects with a range of budgets. In fact, this diversity is what makes this guide an excellent jumping off point for a number of potential technology centered programmes in libraries. However, this guide offers ideas to initiate new projects. Further study and instruction would be necessary to achieve full scale products. This does not, however, limit the usefulness of *The Top Technologies Every Librarian Needs to Know*; as such, the book has an important place within the continuing education and project management life cycles of library professionals of all kinds.

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