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Bradford Lee Eden's Innovative Redesign and Reorganization of Library Technical Services: Paths for the Future and Case Studies (book review)

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"Innovative Redesign and Reorganization of Library Technical Services: Paths for the Future and Case Studies" edited by Bradford Lee Eden.
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This book is divided into two parts: Theory and Case Studies. The Theory part includes six chapters entitled:

- Review of the Literature: Technical Services Redesign and Reorganization
- What is Technical Services? Perspectives from the Field and from LIS Education
- Staffing Trends in Academic Library Technical Services
- Change and Adaptation in the Technical Services of a Group of Mid-sized Academic Libraries: A 14-Year Overview
- Quality Cataloging with Less: Alternative and Innovative Methods
- The Name and Role of the Cataloger in the Twenty-First Century

It is pretty standard fare as far as works of this type go. But to me this part was not dry or at all difficult to get through. It felt like I was reading a history of my 20-year career as a cataloger. And since I had "lived it," I found it riveting; especially the parts that focused on cataloging, of which there were many. The longer I am a librarian, the more important reflection upon my career becomes to me. This work fulfilled that purpose beautifully, though I had not expected that when I suggested that our library purchase it.

In the larger Case Studies part, there are a number of general academic institutions represented: Rutgers, University of Southern Mississippi, McMaster, Union College, Emporia State, Emory, University of Rhode Island, University of Alabama, Georgia State, Ohio State, and University of Massachusetts—Amherst. These case studies are similar to each other in many ways, but each provides a slightly different spin, as well as important insight into the process of technical services reorganization. They run the gamut from inspiring to depressing. I found the chapters that described multiple reorganizations within a short period of time (one endured three in only ten years!) and unsuccessful reorganizations depressing. Most likely because I could imagine the unhappy people caught in those situations. This is not to say that this work should not have included them. On the contrary, the inclusion of the non-successes, as well as the successes, is one of its

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strengths.

Having said that, on the whole, the case studies are upbeat, while also being practical and realistic. Many of the same themes about change are mentioned; how it is inevitable (it is called the new norm by some of the authors), but stressful. Susan B. Bailey sums it up very well when she says:

Change is complex and sometimes frightening. Although we may intellectually acknowledge that we now live in a world of "permanent white water," that doesn't mean that we truly have internalized it and are comfortable with it. (p. 309)

I was not familiar with the phrase "permanent white water," though I think it describes the feeling I (and probably many of us) often have perfectly. Ms. Bailey attributes it to Peter Vaill in his work, *Learning as a Way of Being*.

Yet the feeling of change being out of our control is well-balanced by descriptions of reorganizations that not only involved, but required, input from all the staff involved. Many of the authors state that the human factor is the most important one in the entire process. They then proceed to detail how communication, collegiality, training, and documentation play a major role in a successful organization. This is reinforced by the fact that some of the situations described were derailed or slowed considerably by negative staff, uncomfortable with or unwilling to change.

There is also an interesting chapter entitled "Creating Career Paths for Cataloging Support Staff." This might have been better placed in the theory section, though it does mention the career ladder programs at some specific institutions, which might account for its presence among the case studies. This chapter discusses general problems that are applicable to all support staff: maxing out at the top of the career ladder, over qualification, role blurring, etc. There are good descriptions of career ladder programs in place at some institutions, accompanied by clear guidance on how to set up your own.

One of the case studies is authored by our own ALLUNY colleague, Andrea Rabbia (H. Douglas Barclay Law Library, Syracuse University). It is entitled "Redesigning Technical Services in an Academic Law Library." Andrea does not shy away from listing the errors and backups
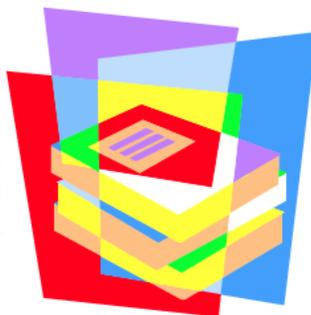
("cracks") that were occurring, thus necessitating their reorganization. Staff are described as weary from all the changes that preceded the redesign, including migration to a new integrated library system (ILS) and the physical relocation of technical services outside of the library. Andrea asks the compelling question: How do we add *more* value (services) when we are not delivering value with the tasks we already do? She then answers that question by walking us through the process used to address their problems and ultimately add more value. The approach began by asking the technical services staff some basic questions, since they were the ones who knew most about their work. The answers to those questions were then discussed and used to identify three major priorities:

1. Creating a complete and accurate ILS database and catalog.
2. Making the entire technical services process as linear as possible.
3. Writing and revising procedural documentation.

This next led to the development of new models and the pairing of duties so as to best meet those priorities. The pairings were adjusted as needed and the point is stressed that such reevaluation must be continual. Andrea also described this process in briefer form in her article "Syracuse University's Adventures in Reengineering Technical Services" in the Member's Briefing insert of the October 2002 issue of the *AALL Spectrum*.

The book closes with chapters on cataloging operations at the Government Printing Office (GPO) and Cornell University's Geospatial Information Repository (CUGIR). In the GPO case study, the emphasis is upon the challenges that have been created by online publishing, something we can all relate to. It is remarked that the physical processing model is of little value for online titles. The GPO catalogers' duties have expanded greatly to encompass discovery, evaluation, and archiving, as well as cataloging. The CUGIR chapter focuses on non-MARC metadata. It describes the effort to achieve efficiencies by cutting down on the redundancy of doing the same work in multiple metadata schemas.

This work is a very interesting read, or at least it was for me. It contains excellent bibliographies at the end of most chapters and many also contain appendices with illustrative workflow and organization charts. While all

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areas of library operation have been challenged to streamline as much as possible in the past twenty years or so, technical services seems to have been targeted more often, perhaps due to the nature of the work performed there. (Or perhaps I am just showing my bias.) This work helps technical services staff to see that they are not alone in their struggles. It also inspires enormous pride in the professional and careful manner with which our colleagues have risen to the challenge to do more with less.