
BRETTLE, Alison and URQUHART, Christine (eds.) *Changing roles and contexts for health library and information professionals*. London: Facet Publishing, 2012.
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In May 2012 the Department of Health published its information strategy document *The Power of Information*, which outlined a long term plan to make information the key driver for improving healthcare services in England. This might appear to be good news for health librarians, presenting an opportunity to play a more central role in the business of healthcare. Such optimism would however be misplaced, for upon reading the 119 page strategy document in its entirety you will not find a single mention of libraries or librarians. Should health librarians be concerned? *Changing roles and contexts for health library and information professionals* offers a supporting hand for those who are concerned. The book encourages librarians to make the adaptations that are necessary to take advantage of roles that are emerging in the health information sector. The authors want to raise the library profession's awareness of these new roles and warn that: "If librarians do not step into these roles, others will".

Since the emergence in the 1990s of evidence based healthcare and the world wide web, an abundance of literature has appeared in library and healthcare journals prophesizing and describing exciting new roles for health librarians. *Changing roles and contexts for health library and information professionals* finds a niche among this literature, but instead of depicting only a single role as in most journal articles this book has the advantage of describing over a dozen.

The two editors of this book have worked in health information for many years and have published widely on relevant topics. Although only a modest 183 pages in length, the book contains contributions from an impressive 33 authors, yet maintains a consistent and readable narrative.

The book is divided into two halves, the first of which reviews recent changes to the context of health library work, whilst the second half presents examples and analysis of the new work roles that have consequently emerged. Each of the first four chapters review the impact of a particular agent of a change which are grouped here under the headings: *healthcare provision* (e.g. government policy), *information generation/use* (e.g. publishing and education), *information technology* (e.g. clinical information systems) and *clinical governance/evidence based practice*. These chapters are extensively referenced and taken together serve as an excellent review of the environmental changes that have taken place in recent decades within the health sector for library and information professionals. Highlighted is the assessment that a shift towards the digital delivery of library services has meant that the work of the librarian has become less visible to the user, and consequently the librarian cannot count on his or her skill being as appreciated or understood as may have been the case previously.

The focal point of the second half of the book is a description of eighteen non-traditional health librarian roles as described by those who perform them. These case studies are gathered under four chapter headings: *the librarian as*

information provider and educator, the librarian who analyses information and manages knowledge, the librarian within research and evidence-based practice and the librarian as decision maker. Each of these chapters concludes with an analysis from the editors which attempts to draw the individual case studies into the wider context of the changes described earlier in the book. The editors also explain how traditional library skills have been transferred across into these new roles. The reader can approach the book as a way of finding out what it would be like to work (for example) as an Information Specialist at NICE, but the real value of the book lies in explaining why these roles exist and how librarians can move into them.

However working environments change in the years to come there will always be a need to collect, organize and provide access to health information. These tasks will be performed by someone but not necessarily by librarians, so if our profession wants to avoid sliding into insignificance we will need to understand how to step into the roles that are emerging. This book essentially offers the library profession a survival guide to working in healthcare.

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