
DEMPSEY, Lorcan and VARNUM, Kenneth J. *The Network Reshapes the Library: Lorcan Dempsey on libraries, services and networks*. London: Facet. 2014.

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The *Network Reshapes the Library* brings together, in print format, a selection of blog posts which originally appeared on Lorcan Dempsey's weblog; these cover libraries, networks and technology. The blog is one of the most interesting sources within the broad area of the knowledge professions, primarily because it often identifies emerging systems and advances in information technology.

I have always felt a touch of nostalgia when visiting Lorcan Dempsey's weblog – nothing to do with the content, but rather the masthead of the webpage, which carries a panoramic photograph of his home city, Dublin, resting on Sandymount Strand in the foreground with its two Pigeon House towers and sweeping across the sea to Howth Head at the other side of Dublin Bay.

It is perhaps an unusual approach to return to print format something that has been born digital. A justification for this might be concern about the ephemeral nature of blogs, but in this instance such is not the case; Dempsey's blog has been published, and has been highly prominent, for over a decade. Whatever the motive, though, the result is a high-quality volume, both in its selected content and also in its presentation.

The writing style is a little different from the norm because, having had its origins in the blogosphere, there is a friendlier; one might say less stuffy, approach than one tends to find in the 'literature'. Coupled with this, there is directness in the blog post that allows the energy of a topic to remain captured in a personal and reflective, diary-like moment.

A further quality trait of the blog medium is its facility to link to a variety of supporting and extending materials. In an off-line print format the immediacy of this facility is somewhat limited. However, the notes and referencing are handled well, so to my mind this difference does not detract from the publication's content.

The book covers material that was published from 2003 to 2010. The time covered may seem fairly brief, but this aspect is rather less important than the topics themselves which are, indeed, far-ranging. From networked resources and network organizations to scholarly communications and memory institutions, this book tells the story of rapid and fundamental change across the information and technology landscape over the past decade. Moreover, because it is not a review but rather a blow-by-blow account of what happened as it happened, it is particularly engaging.

Of significant interest to LIR readers should be chapter 3, entitled 'In the Flow', which relates to the research process. As Dempsey puts it "We are used to thinking about the user in the library environment ... a major part of our challenge moving forward is thinking about the library in the user environment". Of similar interest is chapter 4 'Resource Discovery', in which a selection of posts describe

“the evolution of resource discovery from sequentially searched silos to cross-silo federated search to web-scale single-index discovery systems.” Chapter 7 on ‘Publishing and Communication’ explores various aspects of digital scholarship.

There are discernible themes running through the weblog itself, and through this printed collection. These are the personal pathways that occupy Dempsey’s thinking. His ability to operate instinctively in a networked and connected way is remarkable. He consistently lifts the intellectual level of debate above a simple wonderment with technology or communications. He explores, argues and persuades towards a movement from critical thinking to the next level where synthesis, and in some cases profound analysis, of complex systems leads to discovery and new ways of seeing things. Never afraid to level criticism where it is justified, Dempsey is equally passionate about defending his profession.

The final chapter ‘Lorcan’s Picks’ is a selection of additional material that doesn’t fit neatly elsewhere but which is of interest and definitely merits inclusion.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and would recommend it to audiences at any level of engagement within the Knowledge, Learning, Libraries or Information professions. Dempsey is a master of assessing emerging trends, providing an overview, separating what is important from what may simply be a passing fad and contextualising all of this within the complex information environment. In *The Network Reshapes the Library*, Dempsey delivers impressively on the promised panoramic view.

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