



Book Review

Review of *Hidden Architectures of Information Literacy Programs*

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ABSTRACT

Review of Gardner, C. C., Galoozis, E., and Halpern, R. (Eds.) (2020). *Hidden architectures of Information literacy programs: Structures, practices, and contexts*. Association of College and Research Libraries.

KEYWORDS

information literacy, academic libraries, assessment, operations

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The 2020 book *Hidden architectures of information literacy programs: Structures, practices, and contexts* edited by Carolyn Caffrey Gardner, Elizabeth Galoozis, and Rebecca Halpern, profiles a variety of information literacy programs situated within diverse institutions. The editors sought representations of “all parts of these[sic] programs, not just the parts that run smoothly or serve as exemplars” (p. x). To that end, contributing authors were asked to reflect on the particulars of operating their programs, including staffing, the role of the one-shot, marketing, assessment, and much more. Each author also discusses the institutional context in which they work, highlighting the effects structural context on day-to-day operations. This holistic, structural approach makes *Hidden architectures* unique in the field of library pedagogy and management publications. Early career librarians, new managers, and anyone else looking for real-world examples of information literacy programs should look no further.

Hidden architectures arose from informal networks formed during the 2012 ACRL Immersion Program, an inter-institutional librarian Slack channel, and a friendship between one of the editors and a writing program administrator. From their instruction librarian networks, the editors recognized a need for (and participated in) community around instructional and institutional challenges. When Carolyn Caffrey Gardner encountered the book, *Writing program architecture: Thirty cases for reference and research*, through her friend and the book’s co-editor, she was immediately struck. *Writing program architecture* “exposes the contextual bureaucracies that shape and develop writing programs” (p. x), and it was exactly that type of conversation she wanted to facilitate for libraries (p. ix). *Hidden architectures* highlights the interconnectedness between information literacy instructional programs and other locales on campus.

To solicit the type of concrete information and candid reflection they were looking for, the editors sent prospective authors a list of questions derived in part from their own early-career challenges. These were broken into 11 broad categories such as Program scope (“What types of instruction do you do? Workshops? Tutorials? Online or in-person?”), Operations (“What is the staffing of your program like?”), the Role of the one-shot (“How does your program relate to the one-shot? Is it an uneasy tension, your bread and butter, or something in between”) and many more (p. xii). Although no author ultimately addresses every question, these initiating questions invite real depth of reflection while creating topical patterns and headings that repeat throughout individual profiles. There is depth and cohesion to the book as a whole. Structurally, one way a reader might engage with this book would be to flip through sub-headings related to a particular topic, such as marketing strategies, to compare across institutions.

Hidden architectures is divided into five sections, each focused around a different model of information literacy delivery. These include the teaching team model, the subject liaison model, and a combination of the two. There are also sections for the solo librarian model and programs focused on a for-credit course. Each chapter was submitted by librarians or administrators from the 39 diverse programs profiled here. They range from programs serving upwards of 50,000 students to those serving a little over 1,000. Appropriate to a book focused on structures, at the end of the introduction the editors provide an alternative structure for navigating the book. Instead of the “program model” layout in the table of contents, the alternative navigation is organized by institution type. So, for example, a community college librarian could navigate easily to the four information literacy programs located within community colleges, even though these aren’t collocated in the text.

Each chapter begins with a description of the population served and most go on to discuss program scope, both of which contextualize the information about program particulars. Other sections vary but themes such as operations, assessment strategies, and the role of the information literacy coordinator unite them. Many chapters include concrete examples to illustrate their points, such as questionnaires, org. charts, mission statements, rubrics, and even learning outcomes scaffolded through a curriculum, such as Saint Mary's College of California (p. 163). The level of detail is determined by individual authors, and some chapters are more concrete than others. One library, for example, mentions they do "a significant number" of one-shots, but don't mention how many that is per semester, which would have been a useful metric for comparison (p. 375). Regardless of some unevenness between chapters, each does provide a window into a unique program. With few exceptions, these were detailed enough to get a good sense of how a program functions and what factors shaped the program over time.

A common section called "What I Wish People Knew" emerges as a location for particularly candid reflections and advice. An example of this comes from Veronica Douglas at the University of Houston when she reflects on the difficulty of motivating other teaching librarians when classes inevitably go poorly. "I know what a post-class emotional low can feel like," she writes, "and I don't wish that kind of self-doubt and shame on others" (p. 282). Sarah Mabee and Sarah Fancher from Ozarks Technical Community College advise other librarians to say no when it's appropriate, "own their own power, and approach interactions with faculty as collaborations between peers" (p. 350). These moments are reminiscent of the librarian Slack channel and "late-night information literacy coordinator rant text chain" that contributed to the origin of this book (p. x). Through these frank

moments, *Hidden architectures* offers something more valuable than just a clinical look at operational functionality: there's also comradery.

Individual readers will likely be more or less interested in certain chapters based on the institutional context in which they are (or hope to be) working. For example, as someone in a new role as a solo instruction librarian, I approached this book looking for similar programs that could serve as models. Chapters detailing programs with many instruction librarians were less appealing at this moment. That said, any chapter will have sections that remain broadly applicable. As *Hidden architectures* gives a clear sense of the spectrum of possibility contained in the role of an "instruction librarian" at different institutions, this would be a particularly valuable resource for someone on the job market. A job seeker has to meaningfully imagine themselves working within different programs. The detail provided here will make it much easier to understand the difference between being an instruction librarian at an institution like Ozarks Technical Community College, with only one other librarian, vs. working at a school like Georgia State, which is part of a six-library system (p. 341; p. 20). And, with so many institutions contributing chapters, a jobseeker might well find a profile of the very program they're hoping to work for. This would provide very valuable context for the current and historical structure of the program in question.

While these behind-the-scenes profiles only represent the understandings of certain authors at a particular moment in time, they're ultimately deepened by embracing this quality. As I scanned the table of contents, I saw there was a chapter that described the very one-person instructional program I now coordinate, written by my predecessor. I read his description of the program and the institution with interest, but in just a few years, much has changed. In addition to staffing changes, there are structural changes in the institution's Gen. Ed. information literacy requirements that will reverberate

through the program. The editors explicitly acknowledge these profiles are snapshots in time, capturing “the changeable and complicated nature of all programs” (p. xi). Each program is in flux in various ways, cross-pressured by institutional and individual challenges. The authors’ and editors’ embrace of these complications invites a depth that would not otherwise have been achieved.

Hidden architectures is a particularly valuable resource for early career librarians or anyone considering a career shift from one type of institution to another but has broad applicability. The creators’ dedication to representing reality and not just the best parts pays off. *Hidden architectures* provides an honest look into the structure and operations of a wide variety of information literacy programs. This book is a service to anyone in the field who’s looking for a model, for camaraderie, or for candid advice.