



Book Review

Review of *Twenty-First-Century Access Services: On the Front Line of Academic Librarianship*, 2nd Edition

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ABSTRACT

Review of the book *Twenty-First-Century Access Services: On the Front Line of Academic Librarianship*, 2nd edition, edited by Michael J. Krasulski and Trevor A. Dawes. Association of College and Research Libraries. 320 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8389-3931-4 \$76

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Academic libraries, access services, circulation, management

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As stated in the foreword of both the first and second editions, “Access Services opens the library in the morning and secures it at night” (Foreword, vii). This is often the extent of understanding for those working outside of access services departments. *Twenty-First-Century Access Services: On the Front Line of Academic Librarianship* (2nd ed), aims to expand the knowledge of access services beyond this limited view.

The first edition, which came out in 2013, offers a look at what was current in access services at that moment in time. Editors Michael J. Krasulski, Assistant Professor/Access Services Librarian at the Community College of Philadelphia and Trevor A. Dawes, Vice Provost/University Librarian at University of Delaware, have returned in this second edition to take the reader through current trends, but also to help access services practitioners move into the future. The second edition is a welcome update to what amounts to a textbook for access services in academic libraries. It serves to “...highlight the expanded roles of access services departments...as well as the relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for one to be successful in managing these areas” (Introduction, X).

The book is divided into four parts: Facilitating Access, Leading Access Services, Assessing Access Services, and Developing Access Services Professionals. This is a major organizational change from the first edition and is indicative of the change in emphasis for this second edition, which seeks to more systematically incorporate access services into the broader field of librarianship.

Part I, Facilitating Access, covers the core functions of circulation, course reserves, resources sharing, stacks maintenance, and building management. These first five chapters offer a reasonably in-depth overview of each of these areas including definitions, policies, best practices, skills, and training needed, and how these areas fit into the broader library organization. Part I also includes a chapter on emerging technologies and shared spaces, focusing on lending technology and how to successfully incorporate combined services points. This first part is both practical and theoretical. There are concrete examples of basics such as how to measure shelving efficiency and the pros and cons of different staffing models. In addition, this part covers concepts like strategic planning and successful collaborations, both within and outside the library.

Part II, Leading Access Services, introduces two new chapters about how to manage these departments. These are very different chapters from the first edition, not because they are about different topics, but because of developments within the field. Chapter 8 is focused on how user experience (UX) concepts are now driving improvements to delivery of access services

functions and how they are impacting departments' organizational structures. Chapter 7 discusses "A Framework for Access Services Librarianship," an initiative sponsored by the ACRL's Access Services Interest Group (ASIG) and approved by the ACRL Board of Directors in April of 2020. ASIG created this Framework to provide a legitimate foundation of access services at the national association level. The Framework defines the standards of access services and the core competencies needed by practitioners. It is intended as a guiding document to help those both in and outside of access services understand the scope of this branch of librarianship.

Assessment and student success efforts are more often considered when discussing library teaching and instruction, but Part III, *Assessing Access Services*, makes a very compelling argument that these efforts are important and appropriate in access services, as well. Assessment is more than just tracking gate counts and circulation statistics. Chapter 10 reviews the reasons for assessment, the importance of defining metrics, comparisons to peer institutions, and how this data can be used for a variety of purposes. These include managing local collections, improving the user experience, and creating more efficient workflows.

Part IV, *Developing Access Services Professionals*, also has only two chapters. They cover topics of particular interest to those seeking careers in access services. Chapter 11, "Access Services in Library and Information Science Education," is the third new chapter in this volume and is a vital addition to the professional literature in this field. "Having a course focused on this field would provide an avenue by which non-access services practitioners could better understand it" (p. 218). The authors of this chapter describe the complete lack of academic coursework found in any graduate program in the United States and why this is problematic, not only for access services folks, but for anyone working in libraries.

Chapter 12, "The Kept-Up Access Services Professional," focuses on the history of access services and professional development opportunities. It begins with a review of the field, starting with 1933's *Circulation Work in College and University Libraries* and continuing through a discussion of how access services got its name and how it grew in popularity amongst Association of Research Libraries from the 1970s to today. The chapter continues with different paths to obtain professional development and includes a description of the most prominent professional organizations, conferences and meetings, journals, email lists, and social media. The latter three are bound to become quickly outdated and, in fact, there are mentions of Twitter, which has recently become X. This does not discount the value of the content, but readers should be aware of the need to verify the currency of some of the options listed.

In the Conclusion, editors Krasulski and Dawes recommend areas for access services to move towards greater diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts: combining services points, decreasing the importance of print reserves, increasing resource sharing, and an increased role in

institutional assessment activities. Staying abreast of current trends is critical in the ever-evolving world of access services.

One important omission from this title is an index. If it is to be used as a textbook, it is critical to have an index to help those new to access services find information within the chapters.

I highly recommend this book for every academic library collection and every library and information science student. It is a great introduction to those entering the field and will prove invaluable to even the most experienced access services practitioners.