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**Book Review**

## **Review of *Creators in the Academic Library: Instruction and Outreach***

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### **ABSTRACT**

Review of the book *Creators in the Academic Library: Instruction and Outreach*, edited by Alexander C. Watkins and Rebecca Zuege Kuglitsch. Association of College and Research Libraries. 312 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8389-3970-3

### **KEYWORDS**

library instruction, library outreach, artists, artistic practice

### **SUGGESTED CITATION**

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It is pleasantly surprising to encounter a work that discusses instructional contexts as different from one another as coding workshops and zine creation, but homes in on a central cause that makes contemporaneous discussion accessible. This book tackles a compelling issue—how to support students who are doing both traditional academic research and research related to their artistic practice (sometimes simultaneously). Presented with this challenge, *Creators in the Academic Library: Instruction and Outreach* responds with a variety of chapter authors who tackled this with aplomb.

This volume's chapters serve a variety of functions. Some are case studies, others discuss pedagogical methods and best practices for a group of learners, and still others outline specific course assignments. There is a bit of a barrier to entry for instruction librarians who have not previously engaged with scholarship in this unique area, as some of the chapters, like chapter one's discussion of critical digital making, center on discrete pedagogical theories. While collaborations with other units or faculty are mentioned, this book's perspective is not written in a way where its contents would be useful or illuminating to disciplinary faculty, unless they were seeking to understand the perspective librarians bring to their collaborations. This is certainly a manual by librarians, for librarians.

While the book argues that these user groups have unique information needs, even more information is gained from what it does not explicitly say: the ways we as librarians support them are not so unique. We create LibGuides, we teach workshops and curate exhibitions, we work with teaching faculty in support of their learning. What this volume does well, once the barrier to entry is passed, is demonstrate that we as information professionals have the tools and skills to support these students. The chapter authors make a point of how supporting students doing unfamiliar work can be intimidating. The authors do an equally good job of presenting how to work within what librarians do know, whether they are involved in an artistic practice or not. This will serve to embolden new and mid-career librarians faced with a fresh student population with which they have not previously engaged.

The editors, Rebecca Zuege Kuglitsch and Alexander C Watkins, are colleagues at The University of Colorado Boulder. Rebecca's research is focused on information literacy in the science disciplines, while Alexander focuses on art and design. These differing disciplinary foci bring a unique perspective to this work, as there is an acknowledgement that creators and creativity cross disciplinary lines. Their careful curation and delivery of these chapters creates a volume that is thematically tightly knit. As further evidence of this, there is a second volume of this work (not discussed in this review) that concerns collections and spaces.

Many of the chapter authors identify as librarians, but also as artists, curators, and professors. They come from a variety of backgrounds, not all strictly art and design. The work is divided into four themes, based upon learning outcomes for the initiatives described within each chapter. The inclusion of sample lesson plans, graphics, and finished projects is welcome for a book on such visually focused work, especially because it provides an additional method to quickly pick up ideas for lesson plans or assessments.

The four sections of the book are:

1. Technology, Tools, and Techniques for Creation
2. Inspiring Creativity Through Research
3. Creator's Unique Information Needs
4. Grounding Creation in Research

While the depth of thought that went into these divisions is commendable, the book's weakness lies in the difficulty in selecting what section might most benefit one's instructional practice. For example, you will find a chapter discussing a credit-bearing course on research for artists in both sections 2 (chapter 8) and 4 (chapter 17). Organizing by themes rather than discipline makes sense and strengthens the manuscript, but also creates a higher barrier for entry for quickly garnering information from the chapters therein.

This volume's strength is in its diversity of ideas. Specifically, its interdisciplinary approach presents a unique perspective. Rather than confining themselves to what academics might consider traditional art, the authors have taken a broad definition of what can include creativity and artistic practice, thus widening the audience this book can connect with. For example, musical theatre, engineering design, and creative writing are just some of the chapter topics.

This book is a welcome inclusion to a suite of information literacy and outreach texts published by The Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL). It will be of use to librarians and library workers engaging with less traditional forms of research, as well as those curating exhibitions, shepherding makerspace activities, and working within information literacy programs. It is a pleasant reminder of the myriads of ways that students interact with library workers and the resources and collections we steward.