

Book Reviews

Bethan Ruddock: *The New Professional's Toolkit*

Reviewed by Margaret Katny

Bethan Ruddock: *The New Professional's Toolkit*, Facet Publishing, 2012. ISBN 978 1 85604 768 5

This toolkit is primarily aimed at qualified information professionals, librarians or archivists starting out their professional journey. It is designed to help them establish themselves in their first job, prepare for the challenges of the workplace which they may not have anticipated in the course of their studies and equip them for managing their career development.

The topics covered include project management, teaching, training and communicating, meeting your users' needs, measuring success, promoting library services and the information role, engaging stakeholders, generating funding and doing more with less, managing money, budgets and negotiating, information ethics, copyright, upskilling, professional development, networking, promoting yourself, professional involvement and career development.

Of specific interest to UKeIG members may be the chapters on using technology and getting and staying online. These chapters survey the technological changes in the information world and the skills needed by information professionals to deal with and thrive in the technological workplace. The author assembles guidance on becoming a "zen master of technology", preserving collections digitally, contributing to the online presence, thinking about sustainability and interoperability and social media tools.

Given the number of topics included in the toolkit, the reader should not be surprised to find that they not covered in detail. This is not a criticism as there is a clear benefit to being presented with brief overviews and sets of pointers and concepts that can be followed up if desired. For example, the chapter on project management explains the concept of a project, how to get started with a project, ideas for formal training such as PRINCE2 standard, tools including Gantt charts, software packages and mind maps. None of these are covered comprehensively, but they provide the reader with enough material to guide further learning.

Some topics that one can expect to be of interest to new professionals do not have their own chapters, such as people management and customer service. It could be that these tend to be covered in most LIS degree courses. The overall value of the toolkit does not seem to be diminished by the absence of some subjects.

The author is aware that the information profession requires positive attitude to coping with the unexpected and is honest about what the toolkit does not cover such as how to “make pirate hats, “strap pillows to yourself and dress up as Father Christmas” or “hold a horse while a potential donor of archives examines its leg”. These are real-life examples of professional tasks gathered from the author’s peer network.

The book benefits greatly from the way it has been assembled – each chapter follows the same clear pattern and includes section introducing the topic, “how to” tips, case studies and a comprehensive list of references and further reading.

The case studies are international and from a wide variety of information sectors. Each chapter finishes with an “over to you” section, encouraging the reader to explore how the learning could be applied to their environment, what they could have done differently or would do differently in the future.

The book is well written and a pleasure to read. The language is clear and clutter-free.

This practical toolkit is highly recommended for all new professionals as well as established professionals seeking to refresh or broaden their skills.

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