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Administration of the public library (review)

Administration of the Public Library
By Alice Gertzog and Edwin Beckerman
Lanham, Md. : Scarecrow Press, 2003
(Paperback).
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Review

Looking to curl up next to a fire with a great read this holiday season? *Administration of the Public Library* may not be the book for you. However, Gertzog and Beckerman provide a solid resource for new library directors or recently promoted department managers. This management book holds to the authors' promised premise that a successful manager is one who understands all aspects of the institution they supervise. The result is a thorough mix of management theory and principles alongside practical examples, charts, and checklists.

With twenty chapters, Gertzog and Beckerman cover a wide range of topics. Beginning with the history of public libraries in America, the authors waste little time before discussing the present library world and the context in which it functions. The following chapters analyze a typical public library organization chart and introduce core concepts of organizational theory. Much of this information is not new to anyone familiar with libraries. Newly promoted but

experienced librarians may wish to skip these chapters and move directly to the middle of the book. The bulk of *Administration of the Public Library* examines each facet of the library (technical services, access services, human resources, management, etc). Each of these chapters summarizes the core functions of the particular department, gives context to its relationship with other departments, and discusses how individual departments report success and diagnose underperformance. The final three chapters present a library-wide perspective on library finance, physical structure, and evaluation. New directors will find this section especially helpful as these chapters review essential information on budgets, reports, and maintenance.

Well-received upon its 1994 release, *Administration of the Public Library* enjoyed several positive reviews from the likes of *Booklist* and *Library Journal*. These reviews asserted that librarians could expect future editions. Unfortunately, this 2003 paperback release does not update any material. The chapters on specific library departments suffer the most from outdated materials while the last three chapters are indistinguishable from a text written today. Due to subject matter, Gertzog and Beckerman's work does not focus on technology and the overall effectiveness of the text is not diminished in its current edition. The authors' foresight is apparent as many of their concerns have been addressed over the past 13 years. One notable example is the rise of YA services hinted at in the discussion of youth services funding.

Helpful when initially published, the "Notes and Suggested Readings" section included at the end of each chapter are now outdated. It is regrettable that this reprint did not include any additional substantive information. Gertzog and Beckerman discuss all the underlying topics of management and an experienced librarian or well-studied student will find this book useful as a well-rounded overview and starting point for further research. This text ensures any reader will have a firm grasp on the fundamental issues concerning department heads and directors of public libraries.

Reviewer's Bio

Eric is the reference librarian at the Jackson County Law Library and is in his fourth semester at the Master of Library Science program at Emporia State University, focusing on legal reference and management. Before earning his JD, Eric worked for several Kansas City area public libraries in circulation and reference.