The Black Belt Librarian: Real-World Safety & Security

Warren Graham. Chicago: American Library Association, 2012. 80 pp., $45. ISBN 978-0-8389-1137-2.

Security professional Warren Graham, having worked in public libraries for several years, offers his highly personal and insightful view of security best practices for public libraries. The style is breezy, with many entertaining examples of ill-behaved patrons and staff reactions, effective or not.

This softcover book features chapters on self-confidence, the consistent application of rules, good building design and documentation, selecting security personnel, and how to approach various situations in a non-confrontational manner. Graham's advice is solid, as is his knowledge of challenges facing libraries and librarians. His tone is challenging yet reassuring, and he is able to directly yet gently address librarians' perceived lack of assertiveness, sharing stories about his own early introversion and mistakes.

Some librarians may be put off a little by his rigidity. He suggests that playful kids' areas and teen hangouts lend themselves to behaviour problems, and that only "reading, research, studying, and learning" be permitted library uses—what about playing computer games? But his messages on consistency, education and techniques are worthwhile reading for any public librarians who fear their library is out of control.

Reviewed by Todd Kyle, CEO, Newmarket Public Library, Newmarket, Ontario.

✧ ✧ ✧
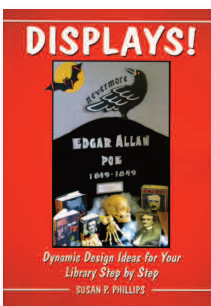
Displays! Dynamic Design Ideas for Your Library Step by Step

Susan P. Phillips. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 2011. 238 pp., $49.95. ISBN 978-0-7864-4024-5.

This book presents 45 display themes, with background on the subject, details on creating the display, sources of materials and expansion ideas. Shorter descriptions of 77 additional ideas and a bibliography are also included.

However, anyone looking for visually appealing and fresh ideas to display and market library collections will be disappointed. The themes—such as Yosemite, Autism and Jersey Shore—are dated and lack popular appeal (especially for Canadian libraries). These are "display case" exhibits, with many types of artifacts (including some books) to commemorate a topic, not to highlight and promote use of library collections. Even so, the whole thing could have been done better.

Each display only has one black and white photo illustrating it, plus two to three pages devoted to an encyclopedia-type article on the subject, which is unnecessary. To prepare a display on Japan, one does not need to read about its economy and population. The author further wastes space by recounting a personal anecdote about her connection to each topic. More visuals and much less text would make this a more useful book.

The sections on assembling the displays are detailed but separated from the photos, so one has to keep flipping back to see what is being described. Offering several display ideas for each theme would have added interest, as would have a concise presentation of basic display design concepts.

Overall, this book is uninspiring and lacks the visual appeal that should be a key element in any work on this topic. Not recommended.

Reviewed by Heather MacKenzie, Branch Manager, Keshen Goodman Public Library, Halifax Public Libraries.

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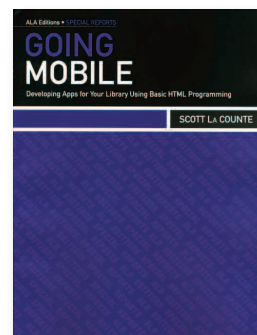
Going Mobile: Developing Apps for Your Library Using Basic HTML Programming

*Scott La Counte. Chicago: American Library Association, 2012. 64 pp., softcover, US$45. ISBN 978-0-8389-1129-7.*

"For the first time, there is a group of people who can have everything they could ever want in the palm of their hand." Scott La Counte, a librarian at Anaheim Public Library and developer of LibFind, a mobile app providing contact information for public libraries across the United States, presents his intended audience (librarians) with a step-by-step guide on developing mobile apps for a library environment.

Book Reviews

La Counte's book is certainly timely, raising awareness of mobile development in our technologically enhanced 21st century, and providing encouragement to libraries to join Generation Mobile (the author's moniker for those possessing hand-held devices) and open an untapped potential marketing opportunity. Writing in a narrative format, La Counte organizes his report into eight chapters, beginning with a somewhat textbook-like definition of mobile apps, and concluding with a number of suggestions or stepping-stones for librarians delving into the mobile world. He thus echoes Comenius' (Moravian educational reformer and theologian, 1592-1670) *orbis pictus* principle (you learn by example). While some of the author's recommendations on mobile site optimization may seem obvious, perhaps even trivial, they can easily be forgotten in the rush to create content. La Counte cautions the reader that creating a mobile app or producing a mobile-optimized website is not about merely transferring content. Mobile devices take on many different shapes and forms, do not necessarily support JavaScript, and contain a number of varying features. Perhaps the most universal piece of advice that the author gives is "keep it simple."

With the influx of Web 2.0 websites, coupled with easy to manage WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) editors, it may seem counterintuitive to revert back to HTML coding for mobile app creation. However, La Counte, with his clear instructions, supplemented with numerous screenshots, tables and figures, makes no assumption about a librarian's technical ability, choosing to ease the reader into the app creation and development process from initiation to conclusion. The final three chapters contain numerous tips, HTML codes, templates and the author's personal remarks on WYSIWYG editors to get libraries on board with mobile technology.

Although written by a public librarian, this book will appeal to librarians in any setting. Librarians no longer need astute technical know-how, nor should it be necessary for them to hire an app programmer to meet their needs. Rather, following the author's advice and taking advantage of the wisdom he has to offer should at the very least get librarians talking about opportunities to take the library into the mobile era. Delivering a realistic portrayal of mobile app development, La Counte admits that "for every excellent app, there are at least ten apps that fail." However, "unless your mission in developing an app is to do something cool and flashy and short lived, think interactive."

Reviewed by Marcus Vaska, Librarian, Health Information Network, Calgary.

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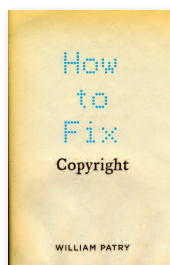
How to Fix Copyright
William Patry. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 323 pp., $21.95. ISBN 978-0-19-976009-1.

William Patry, the chief copyright lawyer for Google, is an international authority on copyright with several major publications on this issue. In a disclaimer, Patry states quite explicitly that this work is his alone and does not reflect the official view of Google. The intended audience for this hardback book are policymakers on copyright on a world-wide basis.

There are 12 chapters, with an introduction and copious references, written in a lively eclectic style with references from Socrates to Big Brother. Patry seeks to challenge the current paradigm on copyright, which is dependent upon an old economic model based on scarcity, gatekeepers and monopolies. His goal is to bring copyright legislation more in line with the digital age. He calls for pragmatic solutions to copyright problems based on political and economic factors, where costs are lower, Internet access is worldwide, and streaming along with cloud computing has obscured the old copy model. He seeks to ensure that copyright holders get remunerated, the length of copyright time is lessened and access, sometimes for cultural heritage purposes, is encouraged.

The clarion call for reform of copyright is clearly made; however, much less space is devoted to specific practical solutions. Patry places the emphasis more on calling for the development of economic models tailor made to suit specific cases. This work would be most useful in an academic or business library.

Reviewed by Gordon Burr, Associate Member, School of Information Studies, McGill University.

✦ ✦ ✦