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Review of The Machiavellian Librarian: Winning Allies, Combating Budget Cuts, and Influencing Stakeholders

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Melissa K. Aho and Erika Bennett, eds. *The Machiavellian Librarian: Winning Allies, Combating Budget Cuts, and Influencing Stakeholders.* (Oxford: Chandos Publishing, 2013), 316 p.

The Machiavellian Librarian is based on an interesting premise in the form of question – what if librarians were more Machiavellian? The term Machiavellian evokes all sorts of back-stabbing power plays that seems an odd fit for library management. However, the editors of this book have chosen to focus on *The Prince*'s author's more pragmatic approach, gathering a group of authors from all levels of the library to write about how you can use Machiavelli's realistic approach to help control your (or your library's) fortunes rather than waiting for chance or fate to bring about change. The book is arranged in four sections that break Machiavelli's tactics into strategic areas, with chapters in each dedicated to subtopics within those areas.

The first section, "Character Behavior for Princes," is focused on networking and other leadership skills necessary for the Machiavellian librarian. Specific tips are given for how to become a leader in your library; how to network and present both yourself and your library in the best light possible; how to build allies, even if you don't have much influence over leadership in your organization; ways to improve management skills or communication with your own management; how to make your strategic planning process include the library's larger community; and tips on how to work to your own personal strengths.

The second section, "New Principalities," is focused on ways to expand your or your library's areas of influence. These chapters include concrete information on how to "colonize" an area new to your library, ways to effect change in your organization and expand the library's influence, how to increase the library's visibility in a school's curriculum, how to promote and achieve changes to the physical space or services in your library, and how to expand your own personal influence to spheres outside traditional library knowledge by pursuing non-library certifications.

The third section focuses on "Types of Armies," another unusual term for library management. This section is about the tools that are available, including using the accreditation process to improve the library and the library's standing within the larger organization; building access and communication between the library and its superiors (board members, college/university presidents, managers, etc.); and promoting the library's successes to the appropriate parties and leveraging those successes to achieve more.

The final section, "Political Situation," provides information on how to discover the political lay of the land for your library; how to build alliances by engaging your users or by building mutually beneficial relationships within your organization and also how to leverage political uncertainty by being active and prepared for potential changes.

The majority of the chapters have a conversational tone that is very matter of fact while providing specific advice and steps to follow to achieve similar outcomes to those that are relayed by the author. As is often the case, there are a few chapters that are less helpful or fit less

into the flow of the book than others, but over-all, the majority of the chapters offer concrete guidance on their topic and may make the reader wish to start a number of new projects before completing the book.

The length of the chapters, as well as their topical nature and standardized layout, make the book an easy read to dip into and out of and make it easy to refer to specific chapters for guidance on a particular issue. Each chapter has clear headings throughout and usually ends with a series of specific recommendations that sum up the actionable items throughout the chapter. This is very useful for quickly seeing a practical application of the information provided and provides a plan of sorts for acting on the information contained in the book.

This book seems clearly aimed at an academic library audience, but a number of the authors make reference to the fact that their experiences and advice can be extrapolated to other library types and situations. This book would be recommended for those looking for unique ideas on how to expand programming or services as well as for those dealing with difficult political climates at their institution.