

Groundbreaking Partnerships for Engaged Learning: A Review of *Service Learning, Information Literacy, and Libraries*

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Reviewed in this article: *Service Learning, Information Literacy, and Libraries*. Edited by Jennifer Nutefall. Libraries Unlimited, Santa Barbara, CA. 2016. ISBN: 978-1440840913. 155 pages.

In *Service Learning, Information Literacy, and Libraries*—the first book to focus on intersections between service-learning and academic libraries—editor Jennifer Nutefall gathers essays by librarians and faculty adopting a variety of approaches to the topic, from theoretical overviews to case studies. As university librarian at Santa Clara University and convener of the Colloquium on Libraries and Service Learning, Nutefall was uniquely qualified to select contributors able to speak to successful faculty/librarian collaborations and to inspire similar partnerships in the future. She suggests that there may be a lack of understanding among faculty, administrators, and students about the role librarians can (and, indeed, already do) play in service-learning. Though a slim volume at just over 150 pages, this book nevertheless goes a long way toward addressing this concern, guided by an overall theme of applying librarians' specialized expertise in new ways to empower students to think critically about the information landscape. Contributors represent a variety of institution types and sizes, ensuring applicability of many of their ideas.

Service Learning, Information Literacy, and Libraries is part of a small but growing body of literature, primarily within library science, focused on the contributions of libraries to service-learning. Chapter 1, written by Katherine Kott, will be particularly useful for readers unfamiliar with these contributions, as it introduces the concept of service-learning in higher education, presents a brief literature review, and discusses models through which librarians enhance community engagement. Kott maintains that “there can be no one-size-fits-all academic library approach to service learning” (p. 3) and that students must be prepared to investigate both academic and “real-world” information (a topic further explored in Chapter 4). Using an illustrative matrix, she provides guidance around planning and implementing a programmatic library approach to service-learning and reminds readers that comprehensive library support includes collections, spaces, and instruction.

Chapter 2 addresses the intersecting pedagogies of service-learning and information literacy, defined by the Association for College and Research Libraries (ACRL) (2015) as “the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.” Nutefall and Alex R. Hodges offer an overview of Dewey's theory of experience, providing scholarly context for the core components of reciprocity, civic education, and reflection. Again, this chapter will be particularly instructive for readers who are new to the service-learning movement, especially librarians with an interest in understanding its foundations. Nutefall and Hodges posit that “if educators want their students to be critical thinkers who can help solve the world's problems” (p. 27), then they must make enhancing information literacy skills key learning goals. They illustrate the parallel development of the two movements and, through a case study, suggest that the ACRL's (2015) Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education can effectively connect the two pedagogies as librarians empower students to seek multiple perspectives. The Framework is a key guiding document for academic librarians who have instructional responsibilities, describing six complex

core concepts for student learning (“frames”), each detailing accompanying behaviors (“knowledge practices”) and habits of mind (“dispositions”). Librarians interested in critical information literacy pedagogy, threshold concepts, and learner dispositions will find this chapter particularly meaningful.

Chapter 3 focuses on meaningful reflection as a key component of effective service-learning/library collaborations. Author Maureen Barry of Wright State University blogs as a service-learning librarian and has been instrumental in spreading the message that academic libraries can be important partners in community engagement. She stresses that the “carefully crafted reflection strategies that make up critical reflection can make a big difference between reporting and critical thinking” (p. 40). As a result, she encourages practitioners to examine the purpose of each reflection question and craft prompts that focus on behavioral changes, disciplinary applications, and problems and solutions. Barry goes on to detail three practical strategies for encouraging meaningful reflection: group reflection, integration of secondary sources, and critical thinking rubrics. Barry suggests that instructors and community partners can facilitate group discussion, providing opportunities for students to both report on their learning as well as ask questions; these reflections can occur within the classroom, at the service location, or in both reflections. She provided an example of successfully integrating secondary sources, specifically local news articles, into a service-learning course to allow students to synthesize their experience with other perspectives. Barry also mentions several tools, including articulated learning (AL) and the Association of American Colleges & Universities’ VALUE rubrics, which could be modified to meet faculty and student needs. Librarians and teaching faculty will find Barry’s chapter a practical and timely resource.

In Chapter 4, Megan Stark advocates for “a new form of information literacy instruction that encourages [students] to use research as a mode of building a bridge between the academic and service information environments” (p. 51). She issues a powerful call to readers to recognize the tensions between classroom and community, and to help students grapple with and even question traditional definitions of “good” and “authoritative” sources. Stark explores the limitations and potential biases of scholarly research and existing socially constructed system, and addresses practical ways to “bring local, community-based information into the discourse of academic research” (p. 55). Stark is honest in her assessment that librarians may face resistance in suggesting to faculty a move toward non-traditional and non-scholarly sources, which may better address community questions and needs. Yet, she also offers a number of practical suggestions, with prompts and questions included in various charts and lists. For example, she encourages librarians to ask students to explore complex aspects of the information landscape such as how they came upon their already-existing knowledge of the topic, what information the community creates and distributes, and how the information available in published sources compared with local knowledge and traditions. Of all the chapters in the book, this is perhaps the most powerful, possessing the greatest potential to transform librarians’ teaching and students’ learning.

In Chapter 5, Deborah Halperin and Karen Schmidt of Illinois Wesleyan University focus on library integration into service-learning through the university’s Action Research Center. In providing institutional context, the authors highlight earlier studies indicating that even students at their highly selective university were lacking the skills necessary to conduct college-level research projects. The authors describe a “tool library” project initiated by a student at Illinois Wesleyan as part of a broader community development effort; the project provides free check-out of basic home improvement tools for area residents, as well as workshops. Reminding the reader that action research starts with engaging the community, they detail the student’s process of conducting informal interviews with neighborhood residents and a survey of successful tool libraries. The authors relate how Schmidt, who is both a university librarian and a city council member, supported the student by connecting him with local government resources, newspapers, and other information and human resources, as well as assisting with data interpretation and advising on archiving the project’s history.

In Chapter 6, Simon Neame of the University of British Columbia (UBC) describes how partnerships of the UBC library system—for instance, with campus centers of student involvement/careers and community-engaged learning—have been instrumental for the libraries. The main library’s learning commons serves as a key touchpoint; peer assistants from a partnering center provide academic learning support and often serve as ambassadors for service-learning. The library system includes a location in the

“learning exchange,” an off-campus storefront presence of the university within the community. This is the center for initiatives such as Reading Week and workshops led by library science students. As its service-learning capacity grew, the library’s role also expanded, ranging from providing seed funding, setting learning outcomes, creating business development guides, suggesting media tools for reflections, and creating a cultural awareness toolkit. Neame identifies explicitly the benefits of service-learning partnerships for the library, which include stronger campus connections and better insights into curricular and resource needs.

Bill Gillis and Phyllis Mentzell Ryder, in Chapter 7, focus on their George Washington University course in which students study community modes of communication. They describe their previous course-focused scholarship, which sought to determine if service-learning influences learner dispositions and attitudes toward research, hypothesizing that it could be a motivator. Their examination of student responses centered on three ACRL Framework concepts: research as inquiry, authority as constructed and contextual, and scholarship as conversation. They provide case studies in which they enumerate the service project background, research process, and reflections of each of three student participants. The in-depth qualitative research the authors conducted using student work strengthens *Service Learning, Information Literacy, and Libraries*; it demonstrates the power of research as well as the challenges students face when attempting to integrate traditional and non-traditional sources. Gillis and Ryder urge librarians and teaching faculty to encourage and listen to students’ reflections, both about their service and their research.

Joyce S. Neujahr concludes the book fittingly, with Chapter 8 focusing on future directions. She effectively draws upon key scholars, including several who are perhaps less familiar to this journal’s audience, such as librarians John Riddle and Megan Oakleaf. Neujahr predicts the continuing institutionalization of service-learning and calls for appropriate resourcing. She also forecasts potential increases of international and electronic service-learning (“eService-learning”). She argues convincingly that academic libraries, service-learning, and higher education overall are “meeting at an intersection of proving our value and establishing ourselves as relevant, viable, and vital” (p. 131). She foresees libraries initiating service-learning librarian positions, assisting with data management, and providing institutional repository support. While she does include some discussion of the library as place, treatment of this topic could have been expanded as it is specifically related to service-learning. Neujahr also draws connections between library science educational standards and service-learning, and recommends that future research explore the impact of library service-learning support on recruitment, retention, and achievement.

A particular strength of the book is its balancing of theoretical and practical perspectives, making it a highly readable volume. For readers wishing to explore topics further, the references at the end of each chapter (some quite extensive) will be useful; back matter contains contributor biographies and an index. An overall bibliography of the most frequently cited resources would have been useful for readers new to service-learning or library science literature. Notably absent is representation of community college libraries. While some of the case studies featured in the book devote too much space to providing background, overall they are insightful and instructive. Organizing case studies into categories might also have been useful, and certain topics, such as how institutional repositories showcase service-learning projects and the role of library collections, would have benefitted from expanded discussion.

Nevertheless, *Service Learning, Information Literacy, and Libraries* represents a key contribution to scholarship in the nascent topic area of service-learning and academic libraries. Faculty would be well advised to take advantage of the services librarians provide to support effective service-learning, and this book offers both audiences much food for thought. The volume advances the research on service-learning and community engagement, particularly around the scholarship of teaching and learning. As faculty and practitioners develop creative pedagogies for engaged learning, this volume demonstrates the potential positive impacts of collaborating with librarians. The case studies included in the book also contribute to emerging theoretical frameworks connecting information literacy and service-learning. The book is highly recommended for librarians as they continue to serve their communities, as well as for teaching faculty and administrators seeking to enrich their programs. Service-learning fits naturally with the professional praxis of librarianship, a discipline with strong ties to social justice and an emphasis on

collaboration, critical thinking, and interdisciplinarity—all of which are strongly represented in *Service Learning, Information Literacy, and Libraries*.

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