

The title of this collection of case-studies invites two inferences. First, “technical services,” the common American term for back-office library processes, especially acquisitions, cataloguing, and e-resource management, suggests a US context. Secondly, “communicating value” implies a focus on advocacy for our sector of the profession. Only the first inference is correct. The editors note (p. ix) that all the contributors are “staff in research institutions across the United States,” but they feel that the volume “can nevertheless provide a road map for an array of libraries.” They are probably right; there is much here that could be of value to the UK’s community of metadata librarians. Most chapters discuss work within the whole “technical services” department, but there are some with a narrower focus, including three with a heavy cataloguing/metadata element (all discussed below), and many of the issues touched upon are relevant to UK libraries.

Despite the claim that this book illustrates ways “to communicate the role [technical services departments’] work plays in supporting the mission of both their library and their larger institution” (p. ix), only a few of the case-studies truly have this kind of communication as their focus; in others the “communicating value” element is tangential; in still others it is barely there at all. This is not a major problem, but readers who obtained a copy based only on the title are likely to be disappointed. The real linking thread between the different chapters is much broader: communication within and by technical services departments. This more diffuse approach means that there are fewer synergies between the different chapters. As with many collections of essays, it felt at times a bit like reading a series of journal articles rather than a single volume. But the book contains many examples of good practice.

Several chapters focus on communication within or between back-office teams, describing the use of technology (Confluence in chapter 1, Basecamp in chapter 2, Trello in chapter 7) or techniques (retreats—i.e., away days—in chapter 3, a community of practice in chapter 6). The strongest of these chapters also argue persuasively for the importance of communication, such as when Faulkner and Sandford describe how good documentation fosters equity (p. 5): “documentation ensures equal access to critical information, mitigates incidental or intentional gatekeeping, creates transparency in local-decision making and cross-divisional communication.”

Other contributions discuss communication with subject specialists or circulation desk staff, such as Mi, Pollock, and Falato’s description of their provision of basic cataloguing and metadata classes to public-facing colleagues. Their project’s aims include “that information could be exchanged, needs heard, and a common understanding established” (p. 82). That the intention was to develop genuine two-way communication is evinced by the survey they sent prospective attendees, asking them to choose the topics that would appeal to them from a list of possible options, such as how to read MARC records, how metadata impacts the OPAC, and what is linked data.

Towards the end of the book the focus shifts to communication with groups outside the library. Hargis and Novacescu describe the involvement of a cataloguer (Hargis) in marketing a library’s resources. Initially seeing it as peripheral to her job, Hargis later came to view marketing as more integral, a way of demonstrating the library’s value to users. The authors argue that cataloguers are often uniquely placed to promote a library’s content, “through their knowledge of the value of a resource for a given audience” (p. 154). This resonated with me in my current work, where we have recently completed a project to catalogue the library’s archival collections. There is nobody in the university who knows the archives, or understands their potential value, better than the people who did the cataloguing, and it is our responsibility to ensure that this value is communicated to users

Perhaps the most interesting chapter is Maggie Dull's description of the Metadata Outreach service at the University of Rochester. This service offers staff and students at the university the chance to consult with the library's metadata experts, and it arose out of a single interaction with an academic, whom the metadata team advised on a research data management query. I have known metadata librarians provide this kind of advice at other universities, but what is exceptional about Rochester's work is that they have built on this chance connection to provide a permanent service that is promoted throughout the university. Other examples of what Metadata Outreach has provided so far include advising the Rochester Digital Scholarship Lab about metadata schemas and standards, and consultation on data governance for the university's HR system. The success of such a service is largely dependent on how well it is promoted, and at Rochester it helps that both liaison librarians and the university's chief data officer refer colleagues to the service, and that the Metadata Outreach webpages are located prominently within the library's website.

Notwithstanding its slightly misleading title, this is, overall, a useful book. The contributions all have a practical focus, are clearly written, and cite the literature only when it is relevant. The volume is well edited and pleasingly presented. It is certainly worth consulting for anyone interested in how technical services departments do and should communicate.

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<sup>1</sup> For the services offered by Metadata Outreach see <https://www.library.rochester.edu/services/metadata-outreach/projects-and-services>.