Book review

Smith, S. (2008) "Hilyer, L. A. (2008) Presentations for Librarians: A complete guide to creating, effective, learner-centred presentations. London: Chandos Publishing". Journal of information literacy, 2(1), http://jil.lboro.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/JIL/article/view/BR-V2-I1-2008-3.

Hilyer, L. A. (2008) Presentations for Librarians: A complete guide to creating, effective, learner-centred presentations. London: Chandos Publishing. ISBN 9781843343035 (pbk). £39.95

Reviewed by Susan Smith, Subject Librarian, Cardiff University

The author's aim with this book is to guide the reader on how to create 'effective, learner-centred presentations'. The book is well organised and split into two parts. Part one deals with human learning and learning from presentations. The author uses two 'vignettes' to portray examples of a bad and a good presentation, and these highlight key considerations to bear in mind when presenting, such as avoiding overloaded slides.

Part two deals with the practicalities of creating a learner-centred presentation. The first chapter in this section outlines the 'presentation process model' which gives a framework for creating a presentation through the four stages of preparation, practice, presentation delivery and review, with the following chapters dealing in detail with each stage.

There are three appendices in which the author provides a basic introduction to three slide based programs: Microsoft PowerPoint, Apple Keynote and Open Office impress. These appendices may be helpful to those inexperienced with such programs.

Each chapter is subdivided into subject headings, with a summary and, in some cases, a further reading section at the end of each chapter. This clear structure and style makes the book very easy to read. However much of the content was simplistic, and although the advice was all valid it often stated the obvious, one of the most notable examples being the author's recommendation that a presenter check for stray bits of spinach in their teeth if presenting after lunch.

The book focused wholly on a slide based format for presentations, and did not mention any other format used for a presentation, such as demonstrations of databases. Discussions of alternative presentation aids would have been relevant.

Although this book is specifically targeted at librarians, most of it focuses on presenting in general – it is hard to see what the book offers that could not be found in a general presentation skills guidebook. It may have been beneficial if the author had talked about specific challenges presentations have for librarians, such as the difficulties of engaging reluctant students. In addition, a more detailed discussion of the range of presentations a librarian may do, and the type of audiences they may face, would have been useful.

The author briefly mentions making presentations more interactive, but does not expand on this in any detail, which is disappointing. The book did occasionally provide some food for thought, for example it gave a good treatment of handouts, stressing that they were an integral part of a presentation and should be a supplement rather than simply a reproduction of slides. But for the most part it is best suited to a complete novice presenter as a very detailed and basic 'how to' guide. To anyone with any experience in presenting much of it is simple common sense. The book is very basic, and not the 'complete' guide to presentations that the book's subtitle claims.