

Book Review

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Medaille, A. (2024). *The librarian's guide to learning theory: Practical applications in library settings*. London: Facet Publishing. pp. 192. ISBN 9781783306992. £45. Pbk.

Ann Medaille's book is aimed at librarians, providing clarity on different learning theories, highlighting its importance to understand how learners learn. The introduction provides clarity and dissects the individual definitions of learning and theory. This prepares and gives the reader the fundamentals before diving into the intricacies of different learning theories and their relevance to library services. The book consists of 14 chapters and each of these chapters contain a consistent format, divided into 5 sections: *Theoretical Overview*, *Implications for Libraries*, *Teaching Librarian's Corner*, *Further Readings* and *Questions to Consider*.

Medaille's book poses the question as to why we have to learn different theories as librarians. Theory is defined as "what we think, while we practice what we do" (Sjolie, 2014, p. 731). This is what the Theoretical Overview of each chapter focuses on—the specific aspects of theory. Medaille carefully expounded on different learning theories and in between these, the author cleverly linked the theories to instructional methods that are applicable in library settings. This section of each chapter might be challenging to read, as it focuses on the nitty gritty of the main principles, rather than the development of the theories. Medaille provides the skeleton of the theories, sufficient to be able to understand how learners learn.

The second section, *Implications for Libraries*, contains practical applications in the library setting, with a list of suggestions and strategies on how librarians can craft activities, consider different approaches to teaching students and modify library spaces to adapt the theories. Many of these suggestions might not be feasible to some library sectors, particularly if they pertain to an additional study space or noise level regulation.

The third section, *Teaching Librarian's Corner*, is specifically for information literacy (IL) instructors, and it suggests a variety of teaching methods. Newly qualified librarians in a teaching role might find this beneficial as it lists different approaches and strategies that can be

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adapted in an IL session. Some of the ideas might be familiar already, whether they are learned on the job, or library school, but the concepts mentioned in this book on learning theory and IL are still worth revisiting. This section, as well as *Implications for Libraries*, can be used to provide inspiration on teaching strategies or activities to be used in class—as educators, we often find ourselves learn this knowledge through experience when teaching (Sjolie, 2014).

The final section, *Questions to Consider*, provides a set of three questions, allowing the reader to reflect on the theories in relation to current services offered and the efficacy of one's teaching methods, thus meeting the aim of making clear connections between learning theories and library applications.

As a teaching librarian, I found every chapter insightful and eye-opening. A chapter that captured my attention was *Dialogue* which emphasised that dialogue is an important part of teaching and learning. According to Medaille (2024), promoting healthy dialogue helps learners “discern meaning of information and construct good arguments of their own” (p. 107) —teaching should not be a one-way street. Dialogue also helps educator to gain insight on what learners know already, what their concerns are, and how we can fill the gaps and address their learning issues. Educators, such as teaching librarians who conduct and facilitate IL sessions, should not simply *show off* what they know about their subject expertise, but impart knowledge. This also links to the chapter *Attention*, where Medaille reminds the reader that learners, with emphasis on adults, can only process a limited amount of information at a time. This is one of the most important ideas that the author imparts to their reader, hence, dialogue should be encouraged during any session or activities.

Each section thoroughly and concisely discussed different learning theories, with practical application to different library settings. It illustrates that these theories can be applied effectively to library sessions, as well as services and spaces to become more engaging for different library users. The list of strategies encourages librarians to adapt the theories and to their own workplace. Throughout the book, Medaille includes scenarios and ideas that are relatable and can make one reflect on the services offered in their own institutions. The book concluded by outlining considerations as to how librarians can take action, which encapsulates the aim of the book “to help librarians better understand how people learn so that they can improve support for learning on their campuses and their communities” (Medaille, 2024, p. vii). The closing statement emphasised and reiterated the importance of learning theory and taking them into consideration when structuring teaching sessions, activities or organising library spaces. This book would be suitable for educators, as well as librarians, as it demonstrates the author's thoughtfulness and consideration of all learners. I highly recommend this book to librarians, and even future librarians who would like to understand how learners learn and ways we can creatively adapt and engage as IL champions.

References

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