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Crash Course in Library Technology Planning
(Book Review)

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A book that demystifies the ins and outs of computing technology is always a good addition to a librarian’s arsenal, and Christopher D. Brown’s *Crash Course in Technology Planning* falls into that category. Despite the title, this work is focused on implementing and supporting technology services, not developing institutional information technology (IT) plans. This slim volume is full of information and will be helpful for two types of librarians: those who suddenly find themselves in the role of onsite library technologist and library neophytes who wish to provide greater value to technology in the library than simply rebooting the computer. The author is clearly well versed in the nitty-gritty details of technology and is quite adept at explaining this information and the processes to the reader.

In the first part of the book, Brown encourages the reader to develop a realistic, personal idea of success in technology support and encourages the use of Google to solve problems. The next chapters do an excellent job of explaining how to triage computer problems and then delve into individual computer troubleshooting. Additional screenshots would be useful to the reader in this section. For example, the author includes a screenshot of the classic BIOS screen but does not show an image of the more modern UEFI page that is replacing the BIOS.

The challenge the author faces in the next chapters—one on mobile devices and creating a mobile-device checkout program, a second about software tools that can help troubleshoot technology problems, and a third covering an explanation of networking, networks, and the associated servers and clients—is that these sites, processes, and companies can and do quickly change, thereby rendering the book outdated shortly after publication. For example, Brown mentions Java, which he notes is used on many websites and would need to be updated periodically. What is not mentioned—and what may not have been known at the time of writing—is that the Chrome browser no longer supports the technology that makes Java function. The makers of the Firefox browser also intend to make this change. This information would have been a useful addition to the work. In addition, Brown discusses issues related to Windows 7 and 8 but does not mention Windows 10. Such limitations may create confusion and frustration for the reader.

Brown is at his best in the technology details, but he also frequently succeeds in tying suggested actions in with excellent rationales for those actions. In the chapter “Inventory,” Brown...
clearly explains how a well-organized IT department helps with obtaining replacement items, staying abreast of warranties, and ensuring efficient upgrades. In the chapter “Maintaining Your Machines,” he explains why installing software to protect public PCs from accidental or purposeful changes by the public is crucial to the smooth operation of technology services in the library. In the chapter “Dealing with the Public 102: Managing Your Own Superhero Status,” Brown reiterates the importance of preventing the public from installing their own software onto library PCs: “Though the final decision is up to you, your answer should be unequivocally ‘NO’” (115). He reminds the reader that the technologist must have limits or be subsumed by the volume of help desired by the public. Finally, the chapter “Future Planning and Goal Setting” presents reasons why the technologist would want to set up personal goals and plans and how these can tie into the librarian’s own annual reviews.

Overall, Brown makes a good effort, with some limitations, at condensing years of technology learning into a short, useful guide for a new frontline technologist. If you are looking for a book on creating a plan for technology services that supports the library’s strategic plan and guides the library in the use of how to assess and implement existing and emerging technologies, this not the book for you because Brown provides scant details on how to develop technology plans or even what technology plans are. However, if you are looking for a book on technology support for small or medium-sized libraries, this is a useful title. Much of what the book shares can be found freely on the web, but this book still has value as a handy reference tool.

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Many would-be librarians have encountered skepticism about their career aspirations or have read pessimistic reports regarding their future employability. In the second edition of her book Rethinking Information Work: A Career Guide for Librarians and Other Information Professionals, G. Kim Dority outlines the ways in which the traditional understanding of the skills possessed by information professionals, and the conventional ways these skills are positioned, are outdated. In her view, librarians, and those with related degrees, are in fact valuable information professionals with skills that are in demand in many areas.

Dority opens by describing her work as aimed at those who have chosen to pursue careers in information work despite the many obvious challenges that face traditional libraries today. Some of the challenges she notes include funding cuts for school and public libraries and a broad contraction of special libraries and positions in them. Despite the challenge of a shrinking pro-