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**From the Selected Works of Steve Brantley**

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# Review of "DYNAMIC RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARIES"

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DYNAMIC RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARIES. Hoffman, Starr, (Ed.) London: Facet Publishing, 2016, xxi+154pp., \$63.00, 978-1-78330-049-5.

Dynamic Research Support for Academic Libraries is a refreshingly inclusive collection of essays with the ambitious goal of broadening our perspectives as academic public service librarians, so that we may better serve a wide range of research needs. For several years the professional literature in librarianship has been preparing us for a shift away from traditional roles and services. This is right and proper since indeed this shift has taken place in the profession and few (if any) academic institutions can claim to be successfully serving their users with solely traditional modes and practices.

What is refreshing about Hoffman's slim volume is that there are few words spent contextualizing the need for a broader view towards research support. Hoffman simply states the plain facts facing so many of us: every researcher we support has multifaceted and diverse needs that are best served with a variety of skillsets both in the digital/technical realm and--where many of us are more comfortable--in the bibliographic realm. She encourages us to view the idea of research support in a holistic way, to see ourselves as members of the larger, multi-functional team of professionals who have a stake in the outcome of our programs. This vision is in contrast to a view of the contemporary library services as parts of a larger whole, equipped to provide services across a wide spectrum, but that is nevertheless a conglomeration of individuals with unique roles and distinct boundaries between skillsets. Hoffman asks us to entertain the idea that even public service librarians can find value, interest and enrichment by engaging in a wider scope of activities. She challenges us to see all the activities as *research support*, not as separate Reference Services, or Digital Libraries, or Geographic Information Systems or Metadata Services.

The work is split into three seemingly non-conjunctive sections, Training and Infrastructure, Data Services and Data Literacy, and Research as a Conversation. There is a brief preface in which Hoffman sets out her rationale and goals for the work and then a substantive yet not overlong introduction that establishes the reason for bringing together the slightly jarring combination of sections, which separately could be sub-genres of their own.

Without attempting an inadequate summarizing of Hoffman's cogent prose, (her introduction could be published separately as a philosophical piece on the direction of the profession), I'll simply quote a line: "Our role as academic librarians is to explore, to learn, to collaborate as true partners in the university" (p. xx). It is encouraging to have one's own curiosity and contribution affirmed when the common assumption about a librarian's input places us in an auxiliary role.

Each of the three sections also contains an introduction, 2 by Hoffman and 1 by Jackie Carter, quantitative data support specialist at University of Manchester, UK. These introductions serve to unify the essays and reinforce the vision put forth by Hoffman.

In section 1, the three essays describe wide ranging projects. They include the planning of a major academic library building, a multi-institution digital library of illustrated 16<sup>th</sup> rare books, and a large-scale professional development pilot aimed at project-based Digital Humanities training for librarians. One might critique the volume for its vast scope, but rather than coming off as sprawling and lacking focus, *Dynamic Research Support* makes the variety seem appropriate to its purpose.

Section two, Data Services and Data Literacy, provides three essays that describe very different aspects of data support, one aimed at training researchers for better data management, an essay recording the arc of

data services at Columbia University, and an essay describing Geographic Information System (GIS) support in disciplines not known for the use of GIS.

The third section of *Dynamic Research Support*, Research as a Conversation, brings together three essays. A case of university wide implementation of Open Access, the creating of an information literacy MOOC, and a case describing a local name authority system for a university institutional repository. These topics are unified by the idea that in order to engage in the research conversation, one must first become information literate, (the MOOC), be provided with the means to access a wide variety of voices in the conversation (OA), and have the powerful tools of a local name authority system to enable greater discovery.

As a public services librarian I focus my professional reading in the reference, scholarly communication and instruction arenas. Reading *Dynamic Research Support for Academic Libraries* opened a world of professional literature to me that I might never have considered had it not been part of Hoffman's multi-functional, boundary-free, silo-busting vision for meaningful, creative and collaborative research support. Recommended for all academic libraries and any librarian who wishes to expand their boundaries and increase their relevance to the contemporary research environment.

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