

Book Reviews

Book title: Managing Change: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians

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Author: Curzon, S C

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Publisher's Description: Guiding staff and organizations through turbulent times – budget cuts, personnel shortages, new technologies, reorganization and consolidation – is an absolutely necessary skill for today's library managers. Susan Curzon, one of Library Journal's Librarians of the Year, has completely revised her classic change manual. This guide outlines the step-by-step processes and detailed instructions necessary for conceptualizing the issues; planning; preparing; decision-making; controlling resistance; and implementing changes. Practical guidance for dealing with technology's impact on libraries, applying the latest research in change management, and developing new strategies for coping with change are included. An all new 'Teaching Tools' section – featuring sample scenarios; questions and discussion points; coaching prompts; motivational tips; and more – helps managers share the knowledge with their staff and colleagues. With a foreword by Michael Gorman, this updated essential guide will help you not only cope – but thrive – in our constantly changing library environment.



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Reviewer: Sheila Corral (*University of Sheffield*)

Book Rating: 3/5

Review

This book is a new expanded co-published edition of a manual issued in the Neal-Schuman 'How-To-Do-It' series in 1989. The author is a library dean in the California State University system, who also has experience as a public library director and a doctorate in public administration. As the title suggests, it aims to provide library managers, staff developers and academic teachers with practical guidance on how to negotiate change successfully.

Part I, 'Managing Change Successfully', covers 107 pages and is divided into ten chapters dealing with different aspects of change, namely: conceptualising the change; preparing the organisation; organising the planning group; planning the change; deciding what needs to change; managing individuals during change; controlling resistance; implementing the change; evaluating the change; and important points for managing change. The chapters range from 8 to 17 pages and each one concludes with a 'Quick Check' list of the key steps described and associated questions. Part II, 'Practicing [sic] Change Management' is a much shorter (16-page) enhancement to this new edition and contains 15 'change scenarios', which are concise case studies of 'hypothetical yet realistic situations', each presented with a

set of questions intended to serve as discussion points or coaching prompts. The book concludes with a very short index (70 terms occupying just over one page). There are no references or bibliography.

The first part of the book follows a standard 'step-by-step' format. The preliminary pages provide a graphic overview in the form of a cyclical model, followed by a summary of the steps described and discussed in each chapter. The chapters contain between three and nine steps each, which are then broken down into sub-sections headed by questions. The step-by-step layout makes it easy to navigate the text and serves a useful purpose in encouraging readers to think through their approach before acting. However, the model suits some aspects of change management better than others and in a few places the use of steps seems particularly inappropriate; for example, the 'steps' suggested for preparing the organisation for change include 'Listen to the staff', 'Respect the staff', 'Maintain a healthy balance between tasks and people' and 'Be collegial', which really need to be managed simultaneously, rather than sequentially. Recent thinking on change management has tended to move away from the notion of change as an orderly, linear process with a defined end-point, seeing it rather as a spiral, which is more open-ended and often chaotic. The formulaic presentation of the subject matter here does not support that view and although the author refers to 'constant change in a constantly changing environment' in her Preface, she arguably does not do enough to reinforce that message in the rest of the book.

Two surprising features are the scant treatment of technological change (although it is flagged as a change driver in the Preface) and the complete absence of any references to established theories and models of change management. Technological change gets a mere three sentences in Chapter 1, which notes (glibly) that it 'tends to be a very complex change because technical expertise, as well as knowledge of the management of change, is needed'. One scenario in Part II deals with an IT-related issue (the problem of users viewing pornography in the library) but much more could – and should – have been said on this subject, bearing in mind the mission-critical nature of technology in libraries, the multiple goals and differing expectations typically associated with IT-related change, its ripple effects and potential impact on library users, training implications, partnership dimensions and the range of implementation strategies adopted (eg pilot, phased, cut-over and parallel running).

While accepting that this book is pitched as a practical guide, comparable texts, such as Gallacher's (1999) Know How Guide, draw explicitly and effectively on both academic and professional literature on change management and there are several points in this book where relevant theory could usefully have informed and supported discussion: for example, Chapter 1 mentions 'conflicting forces affecting change', but does not suggest Force Field Analysis as a framework; and Chapter 3 argues the need for a 'systems perspective', but does not cite Senge or any other writers promoting this perspective.

The change scenarios in Part II are predominantly set in public and academic libraries of various types, with only one special (engineering firm) library included. This section offers useful material suitable for group discussion, role plays or individual assignments for practitioners or students of library and information management. The cases are thoughtfully constructed to illustrate different aspects of change management and their brevity makes them well-suited to a classroom situation. They include a few classic strategic-level change situations, such as dealing with a sudden budget cut, turning around a poorly performing library and responding to the proposed outsourcing of a whole service, as well as tackling performance issues in cataloguing and reference work. However other examples are rather narrowly focused on dealing with unacceptable behaviours of individual staff or library users, which

certainly have the potential to impact at the organisational-level, but would probably be seen by many readers as case studies in conflict management and interpersonal relationships, rather than change management. Moreover, many of the change situations commonly faced by library managers, such as the introduction of a new IT-based system, relocation of a service, merger of formerly separate services or imposition of charges for a previously free service are not covered.

Overall, this is a useful addition to the literature. The advice on forming a change task force, analysis of resistance to change and emphasis on the need to evaluate change are real strengths. The scenarios offer valuable off-the-shelf resources for various types of teaching or staff development sessions on change management and interpersonal skills training. The main weaknesses of the book are its formulaic structure, which sometimes gets in the way of its messages; its poor coverage of technological change; and the lack of theoretical underpinning or indeed any encouragement to pursue the subject further via professional or management literature. For these reasons, it will be best used in conjunction with other more substantial change management texts, alongside published case studies from the LIS field.

Gallacher, C. (1999) *Managing Change in Libraries and Information Services*. Aslib Know How Guides, London : Aslib/IMI.

Lewin, K. (1951) *Field Theory in Social Science*. New York ; Harper and Row.

Senge, P. (1990) *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York : Doubleday.

About the Reviewer

Shelia Corral is a Professor in Librarianship and Information Science at the University of Sheffield. Her teaching interests are Academic, research and special libraries, information and knowledge services; business information; collection management; information resources and information literacy; management of library, information and IT resources and services; human resource management.

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