

Review: ***The Connected Library: a handbook for engaging***

Boyd, Suzette (2006)

Hawthorn West, Vic: Utopia Press

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*The Connected Library* is an engaging text that reflects the experience and knowledge of its author Suzette Boyd. The biographical notes on the author commend her as having 'earned her reputation for innovative ideas and practice by pushing boundaries, engaging users, taking risks and embracing change'. The result is a handbook packed full of practical ideas and strategies.

It's not difficult to agree with John Marsden's comments in the forward recommending it as a 'flight manual for librarians'. Not only librarians, but any library professional with management responsibilities will open this text at any page and encounter practical support. If the reader chooses to start at the first chapter entitled, 'Engaging, enabling and educating users', they will start with the basics of role, clientele and reason for being. This progresses through to the various aspects of building influence, reading programs, library webpages and record keeping, concluding with 'a day in the life of a connected library'.

The lively and engaging style of *The Connected Library* makes it a good read, whilst the compact, accessible layout contribute to its value as a toolkit for the library professional. The creative use of page layout with varying fonts, margin notes, generous spacing and clear chapter tracking simplifies use.

In the style of a genuine manual, the consistent layout of each chapter includes: a) statement of objectives of the chapter, b) reflection prompts that focus the reader's attention back onto personal experience, c) strategies and best practice ideas, and d) a concluding list tips and tactics. The tone of the writing constantly challenges the reader to develop a high level of consciousness regarding daily operations, while encouraging confidence to embrace the proposed activities.

This manual is based on best practice in a well-staffed library, however, that cannot be used as an excuse for complacency as Suzette offers such a range of strategies that just one or two could be plucked from the pages and put into action by any library professional. The conversational tone creates the sensation of chatting with the author as the reader proffers questions that lead to a range of responses cloaked in a wealth of experience.

A notable omission from *The Connected Library* is the lack of mention of the emerging blog, wiki, podcasting and RSS technologies that are significantly impacting on the role of the library professional. Using this text as a springboard to best practice would lay a strong foundation that could in turn open the doors to incorporating these newer technologies. It is a highly recommended tool for every school library.

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