# Repositioning Reference: New Methods and New Services for a New Age by Laura Saunders, Lillian Rozaklis, and Eileen G. Abels

Steve Brantley

REPOSITIONING REFERENCE: NEW METHODS AND NEW SERVICES FOR A NEW AGE. Saunders, Laura, Rozaklis, Lillian, and Abels, Eileen G. *London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, xi +157 pp., $85.00, ISBN 978-0-8108-9322-1.*

Many books in the professional literature discuss the changing role of public services librarians and in particular the roles and responsibilities of librarians performing reference services. *Repositioning Reference* stands out from the bulk of these offerings due to its straightforward and concise writing while remaining nearly comprehensive in scope. Part of the success of Saunders, Rozaklis, and Abels is that they keep their sharp focus on reference service, despite the wide-ranging domains of skill and competency required of contemporary reference practitioners. At its core the book is an argument for a paradigm shift in the philosophy of reference service, requiring information professionals "to develop new competencies and engage or nurture new philosophies that are more responsive to user needs and expectations in the 21st century" (p. 67). While this notion is far from new in the literature, I emphasize the authors' use of the terms paradigm and philosophy because they stand in contrast to the calls for a move away from a passive desk model toward dynamic and proactive services. These represent merely incremental (to use the authors' words) changes to reference services while *Repositioning Reference* posits a seismic shift in how reference services are approached.

I have had the pleasure of reading Laura Saunders work in the past and I am repeatedly impressed with her ability to present sophisticated and historically complex bodies of work in well organized, easily understood language. Saunders is masterful in her ability to synthesize and document the literature of her subject, even for the high standards of information professionals. The chapter end notes and bibliography could serve as the reading list for a post-Master of Library Science specialist certificate in Reference Services at any Library and Information Science (LIS) graduate school.

The book is organized into six chapters and includes a name, place and subject index as well as an appendix of relevant blogs, Twitter feeds and hashtags. Chapter 1 provides one of the best and most relevant historical summaries of reference services I have ever read. Chapters 2 to 4 lay out challenges, new competencies, and current entrepreneurial reference service efforts. Chapter 5 describes a technique for and an example of an environmental scan, and finally chapter 6 on leadership and change management in organizations help the reference department that is repositioning itself understand how to turn ideas into actions. This appears to be a lot of content to fit into a thin volume (157 pages) but as described above, Saunders and the other authors have a special talent for synthesis and summary. Additionally, chapters three and six contain sections on the implications of change in reference services on LIS education. Recommended for any reference service

librarian or manager interested in bringing themselves or their colleagues into the contemporary information service milieu.

Steve Brantley
Head of Reference Services, Booth Library
Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, IL, USA

RIGHTSIZING THE ACADEMIC LIBRARY COLLECTION. Ward, Suzanne M. *Chicago: ALA Editions, 2015, xiii + 148 pp., $54.00, ISBN 978-0-8389-1298-0.*

Many academic libraries are facing a crossroads. With the exponential growth of technology and less reliance upon academic libraries to serve patron's research needs, college and university administrators are looking at academic libraries differently than they have in the past. Many view the library as prime real estate. With the advent of digital resources, is there less need for print materials? Academic library subject specialists need to deal with the changing nature of the academic library collection and consider new approaches to collection development that may include approaches recommended in Suzanne M. Wards's new book, *Rightsizing the Academic Library Collection*.

Ward is head of collection management at Purdue University. She has been a proponent of patron-driven acquisitions and has written extensively about it. She is currently interested in researching the utilization of electronic resources in academic libraries.

The author defines "rightsizing" not as "weeding" but rather as "the correct approach for shaping their libraries into the optimal size to serve their current constituents . . . " (p. 7). The author views rightsizing as "the strategic, balanced, and planned process whereby librarians shape the collection by taking into account" a variety of factors (p. 8). Ward advocates a judicious de-selection of academic library resources and presents a comprehensive plan on how to accomplish the task. She does not view her approach as a "ruthless culling" of a library collection (p. 8). After reading this book, some librarians may disagree.

The book is divided into five comprehensive chapters, which provide the reader with a step-by-step approach to implement a rightsizing project to their particular academic library collection. The chapters are Background, Traditional De-selection Solutions, Rightsizing Solutions, Project Management, and the Future of Physical Collections in academic libraries. A detailed bibliography and index are also included. Because chapter sizes are large, each chapter is divided into subdivisions that discuss aspects of the chapter topic. The book can be read as a whole or consulted as necessary.