

# Being Evidence Based in Library and Information Practice: Edited by Denise Koufogiannakis and Alison Brettle

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BEING EVIDENCE BASED IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION PRACTICE. Denise Koufogiannakis and Alison Brettle, editors. Chicago, IL: Neal-Schuman, 2016, 208 pp., ISBN: 978-0-8389-1521-9, \$75.00.

As a graduate student, I once had the opportunity to meet one of my U.S. Senators, who asked what I saw as the future of libraries in five years, ten years, and 50 years. I spoke about librarians as partners in the research enterprise, as people who help to create new knowledge, in addition to stewarding the historical record. I quickly realized, however, that I was actually being asked to pitch the value of public libraries at a time when funding was growing ever scarcer. My Senator was asking a librarian-to-be to define the purpose of a library, and he was listening with the ears of an appropriator. Now, as a more seasoned librarian, I still think of this encounter often. The moment vividly illustrated to me that at any moment librarians must be prepared to articulate the value of libraries to diverse audiences and stakeholders.

How do we make the case that a library tangibly impacts the communities it serves in order to secure funding? How do we maintain, improve, reimagine, or expand a library's services, as appropriate? In *Being Evidence Based in Library and Information Practice*, editors Denise Koufogiannakis and Alison Brettle make a convincing case that we do so by grounding our professional practice and organizational decision-making in evidence.

Evidence-based library and information practice, or EBLIP, takes its cue from evidence-based medicine, whereby clinicians base decisions on the most up-to-date research literature. Health librarians played a vital role in connecting clinicians with quality research literature and in time applied the principles of evidence-based medicine to their own professional practice. From its origins in health librarianship, EBLIP grew to include many other domains (academic, public, special) and functional areas (cataloging, systems, instruction, special collections and archives). EBLIP has since coalesced into a community of practice within the profession, led in no small part by this title's editors and contributors.

*Being Evidence Based in Library and Information Practice* lays out a framework for EBLIP, then illustrates how the framework has been enacted in different sectors of librarianship. In Part 1: Background and Model, Koufogiannakis and Brettle identify the steps in the EBLIP process as Articulate, Assemble, Assess, Agree, and Adapt, allotting a chapter to each step. In Part 2: EBLIP in Action, librarians from academic, public, health, school, and special libraries review the kinds of evidence used in their domains and discuss several exemplary cases of how evidence is used in their kind of library.

To its credit, the framework put forth by Koufogiannakis and Brettle does not exactly mimic that of evidence-based medicine, but accounts for the context of library and information practice. In contrast to evidence-based medicine, which admits only research as evidence and enforces a strict hierarchy of validity with randomized controlled trials at the top, EBLIP recognizes that its practitioners effectively draw on a range of evidence sources in order to improve their practice. Within this model for EBLIP ‘evidence’ encompasses local evidence and professional knowledge, as well as research evidence. Nor does their EBLIP framework demand performative rigor of research methods. Rather, as Koufogiannakis and Brettle write in their conclusion, “*Being evidence based* means that you consider your practice from a curious and questioning perspective, with a view to continuous improvement” (165). It means being able to say how we know what we know about what works.

Library administrators will find *Being Evidence Based* useful for guiding organizational decision-making. For library and information science faculty and graduate students, it will be a strong complement to any research methods curriculum. However, this book will resonate most strongly with practitioners who find it rewarding not only to perform the essential work of their library, but also to apply their curiosity and creativity to figuring out how better to do the work.

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