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Review of the book Academic librarianship: Anchoring the profession in contribution, scholarship, and service

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Academic librarianship: anchoring the profession in contribution, scholarship, and service

Marcy Simons, Rowman & Littlefield, 2021, ix+105 pp., \$65.00 (hardcover), ISBN-13: 978-1-5381-3620-1

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In addition, Ford's subjects share experiences in engaging in the nascent process of open peer review, one that "offers authors and referees the opportunity to openly communicate, with their identities divulged at some point in the peer-review process" (p. 215). These glimpses into emerging practices of peer review shed light on some of the perceived flaws in the current system and what might need to change in order for a more transparent process to evolve. Ford notes "... academic evaluation and scholarly discourse cultures will need to change. We need a cultural shift to occur in our profession around promotion and tenure. Around power and privilege" (p. 235).

Early in the book, Ford maintains that the reader who may be looking for "deep dives into academic literature and evidence will be highly disappointed" (p. 4). I would add that those looking for a less formal analysis of traditional and emerging peer review practices, based in large part on close reading of librarian practitioner interviews and author introspection, will be highly delighted.


This book is also available as an open access edition at <https://bit.ly/ACRLStoriesofOpen>.

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Reference

McCormack, C. (2004). Storying stories: A narrative approach to in-depth interview conversations. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 7(3), 219–236. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570210166382>

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In *Academic Librarianship: Anchoring the Profession in Contribution, Scholarship, and Service*, Marcy Simons explores the history of academic librarianship as a profession in "a quest to understand why we seem to be divided on so many issues that are hallmarks of the profession" (p. vii). Simons' response is a well-researched summary of the discussions regarding professional and faculty status, LIS scholarship, service, and MLS education. While Simons remains neutral on faculty status, she argues that academic librarianship is a profession worth further investment in the anchors of scholarship, service, and MLS education.

The book, which is organized into six chapters, first delves into the many competing definitions of a profession. The second chapter reviews the history of the debate over faculty

status and the current types of status for academic librarians. The following three chapters define scholarship, service, and MLS education, concluding that each of the anchors of the profession are essential, but need work. Overall, Simons' purpose is to explore the history of these discussions and propose future directions. In the final chapter, Simons expands on trends and often-mentioned challenges facing the profession in the twenty-first century, including artificial intelligence, the end of big deals, open access, and issues of race and power. Simons then closes with six proposals for the future of the profession, most of which integrate the anchors of the profession with the challenges discussed. For example, Simons calls for a required course in the MLS on research methods to better prepare librarians for scholarship, and to include the status of librarians at the institution in job advertisements.

A major strength of this book is that it places debates about librarianship within the context of the growth of the American university, and the development of other professions. My biggest takeaway from this book is a newfound understanding of how fraught the identity of academic librarianship is/has been. Does Simons answer these identity questions "once and for all" as she suggests in the preface (p. vii)? The reader will certainly be left pondering our profession long after putting this book down. Instead of answers, the value of this book is found in the necessary context it gives for understanding the existence of these questions and their importance to our field.

While many publications debate faculty status, scholarship, and MLS education individually, this book fills a gap by addressing these questions together with attention to our past and future challenges. Academic librarians and administrators will appreciate this book for the questions it poses about our profession, and MLS students interested in academic librarianship will benefit from an introduction to the ongoing discussions about our identity. Readers will also appreciate Simons' clear and succinct writing style.

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