

Solomon, Laura. *Doing Social Media So It Matters: A Librarians Guide*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2011. 80p. ISBN-13: 978-0-8389-1067-2. Softcover, \$37.00

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Laura Solomon, Library Services Manager for the Ohio Public Information Network, is considered a skillful social media maven whose talents benefit libraries, even save a library system from huge funding cuts. In her introduction to *Doing Social Media So It Matters: A Librarians Guide*, Solomon writes that the Ohio governor proposed 50% funding cuts to public libraries in 2009, much to the surprise of many in Ohio, a state considered to have some of the best public libraries in the nation. Many Ohio public libraries mobilized quickly, notifying patrons to voice their opposition to legislators about the proposed cuts via older methods of communication: emails, signage, and dedicated library computers to assist patrons in sending messages to legislators directly.

However, Solomon notes that those using social media had a larger and more immediate effect than older modes of library outreach. She sees the technology as directly responsible for garnering the support of thousands of inactive library users who, nonetheless, were eager to help their public libraries once they discovered the situation via social media. Solomon created a twitter hash tag, *#saveohiolibraries*, and once the Twitterverse was galvanized, support for the libraries spread rapidly to Facebook, YouTube and other social media staples. She credits social media with saving more than \$147 million in funding cuts that could have devastated many of Ohio's nationally known public libraries. Solomon's efforts were rewarded by being named as one of *Library*

Journal's "Movers and Shakers" of 2010.

The author concludes the introduction by explaining the main purpose of her book. She wants libraries to know that merely possessing the tool of social media does not guarantee success for your institution's foray into these wildly popular technologies. An institution must know how to use it effectively or otherwise they might waste "time, resources, and opportunities to connect with the very people they want and need to reach."

Solomon seeks to educate library social media newbies with seven brief chapters, each opened with an appropriate epigraph to introduce the chapter's content. Some chapter titles include, "Getting Started," "Understanding Social Capital," "Strategies for Social Media Success," and "Is It Worth It?" At the end (bottom) of her no-nonsense, brief chapter sections, she consistently provides "Bottom Line" summaries set apart from the text in subtle accent boxes, which this reviewer found gimmicky. One wonders if the proliferation of the "Bottom Line" boxes indicates Solomon feared that her concise, to-the-point sections were simply not brief enough. Everything needs to be "bottom-lined" and tidily encapsulated, Twitter-style.

The first chapter titled, "Getting a Better (Grip) on Social Media," effectively drives home the point that libraries who enter the world of social media had better get used to the technology's required interaction or they will fail. Solomon saliently notes that both libraries and social media are for the people and of the people. Libraries may be organizational entities but they will be perceived as a person in the social media world and "will need to act and speak accordingly." The rest of the chapter describes how to "let go of the message," because in social networking there is no official voice; users now

control the message. Putting out an institutional message was once a one-to-many approach, but social technologies have changed it to a many-to-many broadcast model instead. The chapter concludes with advice to budding social media gurus on how to achieve buy-in from wary administrators and staff, if needed.

Chapter 3, “Understanding Social Capital,” defines the concept well and offers astute strategies to increase social capital with your users. Solomon writes, “Having social capital is...equivalent to having credibility in a selected online community...others recognize you as someone who provides value and promotes content from others in addition to your own. Social capital can only be earned over time by participating appropriately in the community.” Chapter 4, “Strategies for Social Media Success,” is the most helpful to social networking beginners. Living up to its title, the chapter provides many strategies for social media success, including advice on library “friending” with a useful comparison table, how to empower library staff by encouraging employee tweeting like Zappos.com (a company “that gets social media right”), the importance of learning one’s community, how response time matters, and how to make your status updates more effective by giving information in a personable way rather than just providing the facts.

Chapter 6, “Is It Worth It?” is valuable because it lays out the many reasons why an institution might fail at social media, how to tell if it’s time to “pull the plug,” and how to end your institution’s social networking if it seems like the thing to do.

Throughout this brief book, Solomon succeeds admirably in conveying to readers her thoughtfulness and expertise on the topic of social media technologies. *Doing Social Media So It Matters: A Librarians Guide* is not scholarly, but does provide chapter notes,

bibliography, and an index, all of which make it a practical resource with sufficient gravitas, and this reviewer finds it suitable for both academic and public collections. But, as a librarian in a budget-conscious institution, the American Library Association price of \$37.00 does seem excessive for the 80-page softbound edition. The ALA e-Editions e-book is not much better at \$30.00 and the print/e-book Bundle is priced at \$43.00.