

McCook, Kathleen de la Pena. *Opportunities in Library and Information Science Careers*.

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Tony Fonseca, Nicholls State University

McCook, a seasoned author and well-respected voice in the discipline, hits a rare sour note in her preface to *Opportunities in Library and Information Science Careers*. Although she tackles issues like the ultimate function of a good librarian, namely to “help people get the variety of information they need quickly and easily,” arguing that therefore “today’s librarians and information specialists must be both knowledgeable about where and how to find the desired information and proficient in the ways of accessing it” (vii), she writes very little useful information in her preface that would give readers a specific idea about the purpose of the book itself. While this may seem unnecessary given the work’s title, it leaves the reader lost when considering the scope, limitations, and methods of the work. That being said, this revised edition 2009 edition of *Opportunities* offers sound advice to undergraduates who might be considering a SLIS program, as well as graduates who are just beginning their MLIS work.

In Chapter 1, McCook provides some background information by discussing the evolution of libraries, including a brief synopsis of the concepts behind information science and the theories developed by people who, for want of a better term, served as ur-librarians. McCook theorizes that any task that requires the organization, analysis, and dissemination of information falls into the domain of the librarian and/or the information scientist, grouping both under the umbrella term information professional, stating that “The information profession is concerned with the ways people create, collect, organize, store, retrieve, send, analyze, and use

information” (9). She traces this back to the SLIS preparation process by noting that such a moniker designates individuals who have been educated to organize, retrieve, and disseminate information. It would be difficult to imagine a better description of an MLIS education than McCook’s succinct phrasing. Nonetheless, the impetus of this text is not the educational process, but the professional results of that process, so McCook quickly gets back on task, explaining that careers in information science often require mobility, as most positions are advertised nationally, and for those desiring advancement, the odds are that this will require an institutional change.

McCook avoids the problem seen in many texts about professions by making it clear that being a librarian is not a 9 to 5 job. Like all professional positions, most librarian duties also incorporate the need to remain current through memberships in professional associations. I did find McCook’s list to trend towards the typical in her list of associations, but she does an admirable job of making the broader argument for such memberships. What undergraduate readers are going to like most about this text is the emphasis on the diverse possibilities for professionals, for McCook points out that what stands out about the library and information field is the diversity, in both of the types of work and the locations, meaning library types, in which this work is performed. She cites statistics to validate this line of argument, specifically those of the American Library Association, which estimates that there are 123,291 libraries of all kinds in the United States today.

Chapter 2 chronicles some of the issues faced by information professionals on the job, in different types of libraries, including medical/hospital, corporate, and legal, also examining the day-to-day routines of information brokers, library directors (public and academic), and specialists. McCook performs a great service to those readers who might be just beginning a

SLIS program by reminding them that just as it is true that not everyone who works in an information institution such as a library is a librarian, not all librarians have to work in libraries. She gives examples of the tangential work titles information professionals can aspire towards, such as archivists, publishing agents, editors, multimedia specialists, information brokers, consultants, even professors (SLIS faculty). Keeping with the theme of preparation and education, her next two chapters are in-depth discussions of education and career placement. McCook rounds out the text with the final chapter, the “Future of the Information Professions.” Given the exponential rate at which the discipline changes due to technological advancements, no text on the profession should end any other way.

McCook may well be one of the premiere scholars in librarianship today, and this revised edition of her introductory text to the field will do nothing to tarnish the literary reputation she has amassed through the combination of her various monographs on becoming a practitioner in the field; her volumous article publishing on librarian rights, unionization, and social justice/human rights in general; and her consistency in professional blogging (*A Librarian at the Kitchen Table*, *Union Librarian*, *Librarian*, and *Working Librarian*). I highly recommend this text for all libraries, academic and public, which serve a constituency of young adults who may someday wish to become information professionals.