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A Review of “Digital Libraries and Information Access: Research Perspectives”

Margaret Heller

Loyola University Chicago, mheller1@luc.edu

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G. G. Chowdhury and Schubert Foo (Eds.). 2012. *Digital Libraries and Information Access: Research Perspectives*. Chicago, IL: Neal-Schuman/ALA, 256 pp. ISBN: 978-1555709143. List price \$ 99.95 (paperback).

The concept of a digital library encompasses many potential areas of research that evolve rapidly with new technologies and approaches to libraries. The editors (who are responsible for four chapters in addition to an introduction) situate the book within the need for authoritative research in such a rapidly changing realm. Since the field is so broad, this book brings together edited chapters from experts in the many fields of librarianship and technology that touch digital libraries to give a comprehensive view of current research and practical issues surrounding them. While there is some coverage of purely technical issues, most of the chapters cover the human interaction with technology, particularly in regard to usability and social cataloging. The majority of the contributors to this volume are from locations other than North America, particularly Australia and Singapore, which gives the book an international focus.

Generally, the coverage was stronger in the chapters with overviews of technical topics or social issues. The strongest material focused on social responsibility in digital libraries, which includes attention to accessibility, usability, open access, and appropriate use of materials created by minority or marginalized cultures. The coverage of social media and crowd-sourcing was generally uncritical and perhaps elided some of the challenges inherent in those methods. For readers in the United States, some of the content will be less useful, particularly the chapter on copyright, which has an Australian basis that is rather different than American copyright law. That notable example aside, the international scope is an important feature of the work, since it gives perspectives less common in much of the current practical literature on digital libraries.

Considered as a whole, with such a broad range of content and very recent research included, this book would definitely be useful to librarians doing work related to digital libraries, particularly if they are starting out in the field. It would also make a very appropriate textbook for an introduction to digital libraries. For those doing more specialized work or research, some individual chapters could also prove helpful as a reference. Finally, while the specific technologies will change over time, most of the underpinning research in this book will remain valuable for many years to come.

Margaret Heller

Loyola University Chicago

Chicago, IL