

**Book Review: Literacy and Reading Programmes for Children and Young People: Case Studies from Around the Globe. 2 volumes: 1: USA and Europe. 2: Asia, Africa, Australia, and the Middle East; by Patrick Lo, Stephanie Wu, Andrew Stark, and Bradley Allard. Apple Academic Press/CRC Press**

Patrick Lo has already made a significant name for himself in the area of children, young people, literacy, and libraries, not least through his imaginative and effective use of ethnographic approaches to research in the field. This two-volume publication presents interviews with over 40 librarians from around the world (19 different countries), a truly international book: just check out the forewords and the endorsements and the interviews, their range, variety, and provenance and also the background and experience of the four editors to confirm that fact.

Bringing all these people together, whether it is the interviewees, the interviewers, the other authors, or the pre-reviewers must have been a significant task in itself. This global reach is nowhere more evident than in the complementary backgrounds of the editors themselves; between them, they bring a rich and broad back-story to their tasks and roles.

As with Lo's other books of this type (such as *Effective School Librarianship: Successful Professional Practices from Librarians around the World*, which I have also reviewed favourably and which could be said to be a companion publication), it is the direct access to the voices of the librarians represented here that makes this title so valuable; it is not just the geographical diversity of the coverage, but also the many different *types* of library included – national and special, public, mobile - that makes the publication so special.

I cannot recollect a book that is so comprehensive in its approach on the one hand, and so clever at drilling down to the local solutions put in place in specific contexts and environments on the other. Those involved need to be thanked and praised not only for their willingness to participate but also their candour in answering the questions put to them. The particular difficulties associated with providing library services during the pandemic and the ways in which they have been overcome, are logged. So too are the significant and continuing issues associated with the 'digital divide' – a persistent problem exacerbated and highlighted by COVID-19 and its differential effects on communities, cultures, people, and infrastructures.

This ethnographic approach brings a considerable authenticity to *Literacy and Reading Programmes for Children and Young People*. The daily challenges, struggles, sacrifices, resilience, and achievements of these librarians are recorded throughout the two volumes. Given the range of contributors, one would have thought that the experiences would be diverse to the point where there was little in common between them. Far from it. The professional values

and approaches are always evident, and the imaginative and innovative ways in which they are applied is impressive. There is much in these case studies that is applicable almost irrespective of context and environment. In particular, it is always evident that the reader is at the heart of what libraries and librarians are – and should be – doing.

The interview format (as with Lo's other books, referred to earlier) works well both in bringing out the especial 'first-hand' experiences and views of the individual librarians *in their own words*, whilst ensuring that the reader has the facility to compare and contrast the case studies through the standard approach to organizing the transcripts. It is good that we learn so much about the people *themselves* - and their passion for library work - as a result. The use of photographs and text boxes adds much to the appearance and readability of the two volumes. The title's dedication to 'all the librarians who have made a difference' – many of whom are included in this publication - is apposite.

Each volume begins with a valuable introduction and overview of children and teen reference services and 'final conclusions' on the future of children and young adults' librarianship. Both sections have useful references to other key texts in the field. The book will be especially valuable as a support to the range of initiatives and activities carried out by IFLA's Libraries for Children and Young Adults Section that supports library services and reading promotion initiatives catering to children and young adults around the world.

As Clara Chu, in her foreword to the book, concludes, 'the acts of literacy and reading ... are critical in the process of self-actualisation, self-realisation and active citizenship'. This book will do much to bolster that view, to reaffirm the centrality of library services in those acts and to inspire librarians the world over to continue to fulfil their role in this crucial work, especially post-COVID. It is a 'must read' for all involved in the field, not least (as the editors hope) 'as a springboard to inform innovative practice and encourage evidence-based research amongst library professionals whose vocation is to provide literacy-based support services for children and young people around the world'.

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