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Librarian's Guide to Writing for Professional Publication (Book Review)

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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Book reviews (editorially reviewed)

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Deyrup, M. M. (2019). *Librarian's Guide to Writing for Professional Publication*. Libraries Unlimited.

The first thing to note about this book is that the title is a bit misleading. I purchased the book assuming that “professional publication” stood for scholarly or academic writing. In this context, however, the author considers professional publication to be librarians’ day-to-day writing. While a portion of one chapter discusses academic writing, this book covers the basic document types that librarians write as part of their professional responsibilities. The author divides professional writing into memos, reports, and letters, with other document types belonging to those categories. The first four chapters of the book provide an overview of the writing process, and the following chapters discuss different document types.

The book consists of 10 chapters:

1. Introduction
2. The Basics of Writing
3. The Writing Process
4. The Template Method
5. Born Digital
6. Shorter Documents
7. Multifaceted Writing Projects
8. Newsletters, News Stories, Press Releases, Library Correspondence, and Surveys
9. Résumés, Job Advertisements, Cover Letters, and Job Recommendation Letters
10. Writing for Students who Seek a Degree, LIS Professors, and Academic Librarians on the Tenure Track

The author has twenty years of experience in academic libraries as well as experience as a writing teacher and editor. The book’s audience is information specialists, and while the techniques and advice might benefit other professions, the library-focused examples would likely disinterest non-librarians. MLIS students and early career librarians would be the best audience for this book and would benefit from the advice,

document descriptions, and examples. Most of the content would be too basic for an experienced professional working in the field.

The author asserts that writing is a craft that takes practice and provides useful advice about the writing process. The section about writing challenges and bad habits is helpful for those who haven't yet identified problems with their own process. The author describes the perfectionist, the procrastinator, the disorganized writer, and the multitasker and provides strategies for each of these personality types. This section is particularly helpful because it makes the reader reflect on their writing style and the difficulties they might face with their writing process.

The author is a proponent of the "template method" and focuses on this method throughout the book. The template method recognizes the structure of a document type and uses it as a model by replicating that structure and customizing it to suit the writer's needs. This method allows the writer to organize their work prior to writing and then add content based on the outlined structure. This is particularly useful when writing a document type for the first time. The author includes templates and examples for common documents types that are helpful for new librarians, such as memos, a memorandum of understanding, minutes, and reports. As an early career librarian, I have found myself using the template method since reading the book. Breaking down the structure of a document and then filling in the content has proven to be an effective writing strategy that makes writing feel less overwhelming. This book is useful as a reference resource for new librarians that can easily be consulted to assist with writing.

One chapter that isn't particularly useful is "Born Digital," which outlines digital forms of communication and provides examples. Given that the audience of the book is information specialists, particularly students and early career professionals, this audience would not likely gain any knowledge from an overview of electronic communication and descriptions of social media platforms.

The book ends with a workbook in the appendix that includes questions and exercises for each chapter. Because it is at the end of the book, the workbook is easy to forget or disregard. The questions and exercises likely would have been more helpful had they been contained within or at the end of each chapter rather than at the end of the book.

Overall, the language in the book is simple and easy to understand, with plenty of examples, perspectives from professionals, and useful advice. The book is well organized and therefore is a great reference resource. I will consult this book whenever I need to write a type of document for the first time and will continue to make use of the template method. This book would make a valuable addition to any new librarian's professional bookshelf to assist them with their professional writing.

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