

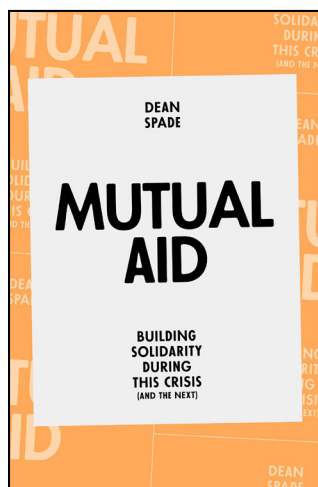
faculty at large, are looking to the presentation to show them how you think, how you work, and how you plan," 96). These revelations are balanced with an eye toward practical details, such as suggestions for what to pack for the full-day interview and which critical documents you should bring multiple hard copies of (109). The final chapters race through what happens after you get an offer (119), tease out major themes of the book (127), and offer strategies for adjusting to the new role (131).

Occasionally throughout the book, Press presses pause on the how-to spirit of the text to acknowledge the ways that the process she's describing perpetuates inequalities, as with the expectation that finalists for the job can and will pay the costs of their visits up front until reimbursed (15). Other times, the real fact that the applicant and the institution are not on equal footing is recast as a "mindset" problem that the applicant must learn to overcome in order to succeed, as when Press writes that "[m]any people ... create a tense environment for themselves where it becomes difficult to let go of their desire or need for a job" (108). In another moment, Press goes even further in obscuring the real relationship between parties, telling the reader that "[y]ou are hiring them to be your employer just as much as they are hiring you to be your employee" (26). In fairness, this reminder seems to be meant to give the reader a feeling of empowerment, and indeed the entire point of the book is to clear the cloistered air of academic library hiring. All of which make some absences from this guidebook that much more conspicuous.

It's surprising that the book doesn't offer any advice specific to those who are already employed in an academic library as part-timers who are looking for a full-time position. Nor does the book address in any depth those who are seeking academic librarianship as a second career. True, much of the advice can be translated into either of those situations, but the lack of special attention is a drawback. Therefore, readers in such situations might struggle against feeling a bit jaded at times. But at its best, *Get a Job* is a readable how-to manual that can be referred to again and again as that first job search unfolds. —Max Thorn, *Queens College, City University of New York*

Dean Spade. *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity during This Crisis (and the Next)*. London: Verso, 2020. 128p. Paper, \$14.95 (ISBN 978-1-8397-6212-3).

Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (and the Next) by Dean Spade is about creating and maintaining relationships, organizations, and projects that help people survive in crises, processes that together are known as "mutual aid." Mutual aid helps people refuse to be disposed of and refuse to dispose of one another. In doing so, it offers the means to develop a better analysis of the conditions of people's lives and builds capacity for sustained action to improve those conditions. Tending to one another through mutual aid opens doors to other forms of organizing. Among library workers, this book may be most useful to those who are fighting for better conditions in both workplaces and communities.¹ Sustaining mutual aid, Spade argues, is a twofold matter. First, it involves a sense of being in struggle with: understanding one's survival and liberation as being tied to others' survival and liberation. Second, mutual aid expands the landscape of struggle by showing that empty stomachs, living unhoused, precarious and invisible labor, and institutionalization (in prisons, long-term care, and "digital poorhouses"²) are each political and therefore sites of struggle.



Mutual Aid is not an appeal to people with power to give it up, step aside, or make room. Instead, it addresses people building power together to achieve their goals. While Spade writes within a U.S. context,³ this book may prove useful in communities and struggles beyond the United States, even where frameworks for mutual aid, political education, and organizing already exist among library workers.

The first section of the book (“What Is Mutual Aid?”) outlines the above foundations. Spade explains that mutual aid projects meet people’s needs and “build shared understanding about why people do not have what they need” (9), often existing alongside, in lieu of, and in critique of institutions. Projects accomplish this through many forms of reciprocity depending on what a given group needs, such as food distribution and legal aid,⁴ emotional and material support during illness and loss,⁵ strike funds,⁶ community schools,⁷ transnational hometown associations,⁸ shared child and elder care,⁹ support for reproductive health and harm reduction,¹⁰ and maintaining shared resources.¹¹

The second section is an extended critique of organizational behaviors called “Working Together on Purpose.” The first chapter (“Some Dangers and Pitfalls of Mutual Aid”) addresses problems that may arise from relationships among participants in mutual aid projects. Troubles like a hierarchy of deservingness, professionalization, co-opting movements, and displacing public programs to corporate entities can all manifest within mutual aid work. Spade associates the above problems with charitable activities, which he contrasts with mutual aid throughout the book. To avoid these hazards, participants must determine the nature of aid themselves, not be subject to criteria imposed by external parties. Furthermore, there must not be sharp divides among participants such as “giving” and “receiving” or “leader” and “follower” roles.

Next follows a chapter titled “No Masters, No Flakes,” a play on the anarchist slogan, “No gods, no masters.” This is a collection of observations about nonhierarchical organizations, consensus decision-making, and accountability. It is best read knowing that Spade is writing for people whose survival depends on managing conflict, being accountable to one another, and bringing everyone along. The stakes are high because no one is disposable. Difficulty managing conflict is a widespread condition,¹² and *Mutual Aid* would be useful enough as a sourcebook when knotty group problems call for the perspective of someone who has learned from many collectives.

This chapter helpfully focuses on structures in analyzing how groups work. For example, it shifts away from the idea that bad things happen in communities or organizations because of toxic individuals, instead recognizing that toxic behaviors indicate structural problems.¹³ Spade demonstrates that people attempting to survive together may find themselves adopting behaviors that have damaging effects and argues that group structure is the most effective site of intervention. Similarly, he describes feelings associated with the common experience of burnout—including resentment, competition, and shame—in terms of their impact on the mutual aid group rather than on individuals. Burnout is relational, mattering not because it feels bad or is irrational or abnormal, but because it points to structural problems and portends abuse.

Spade seeks modes of organizing that meet the needs of both present and future, sacrificing neither to the other: “What we build now, and whether we can sustain it, will determine how prepared we are for the next pandemic, the climate-induced disasters to come, the ongoing disasters of white supremacy and capitalism, and the beautifully disruptive rebellions that

will transform them" (29). There are many crises to choose from: slow and sudden, inevitable and avoidable. Although the frame story in *Mutual Aid* is one of acute crisis—it opens and closes with a few pages on pandemic times—its arguments are equally relevant to creeping crises like the “slow violence” of environmental injustice,¹⁴ decades of austerity in public agencies, and genocide by state-sanctioned violence and denial of self-determination. Among other lessons for library workers, *Mutual Aid* asserts that crises are differently constituted and legible.¹⁵ Without mutual aid, it’s easy for the powerful to make invisible the crises of the less powerful. Through mutual aid, people make and keep their shared crises legible to themselves and maintain one another in struggles that affect their lives.

Spade addresses the question *Is it mutual aid or is it charity?* throughout the book with an abundance of two-column charts and a chapter titled “Solidarity Not Charity!” This work reflects an understandable fear that imprecise definitions clear the way for appropriation. Building on this discussion, readers will benefit from also engaging with each other over concepts like political education and power, on which the success of mutual aid and movements turn. Indeed, it’s always good to read work that *isn’t* written to an audience who already runs the world. Rather than appealing to the reason or goodwill of powerful people, I encourage library workers reading *Mutual Aid* to focus on building a credible base of collective power, to achieve justice that improves the conditions of their lives. — Amy Wickner, University of Maryland

Notes

1. For recent examples of library and higher education workers organizing labor and communities together, see Libraries For All St. Louis County, Concerned Black Workers of the Free Library of Philadelphia, and Bargaining for the Common Good, each of which have engaged community members in labor struggles and recognized workers as embedded in communities. See also the Movement for Black Lives’ Economic Justice Platform, which enumerates worker rights alongside demands for economic development and environmental justice in Black communities (Movement for Black Lives, “Economic Justice,” <https://m4bl.org/policy-platforms/economic-justice/> [accessed 28 January 2021]).

2. Virginia Eubanks, *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 2018).

3. I base this statement on mentions of 501(c)3, FEMA, D.A.R.E., the IRS, and other United States–specific names for categories, programs, and agencies.

4. Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008).

5. Alex Gitterman and Lawrence Shulman, *Mutual Aid Groups, Vulnerable and Resilient Populations, and the Life Cycle*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005); Philip M. Kayal, *Bearing Witness: Gay Men’s Health Crisis and the Politics of AIDS* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993); Paul Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

6. Chris Brooks, “How West Virginia Activists Organized a Solidarity Fund for the Uprising,” *Labor Notes* (June 19, 2018), <https://labornotes.org/2018/06/how-west-virginia-activists-organized-solidarity-fund-uprising> [accessed 6 January 2021]; Ellen David Friedman and Stephen Pillion, “Hong Kong Dockers Claim Victory,” *Labor Notes* (May 7, 2013), <https://labornotes.org/2013/05/hong-kong-dockers-claim-victory> [accessed 6 January 2021]; Dan La Botz, “Honduran Teachers Win Month-Long Strike in Defense of Public Education,” *Labor Notes* (August 31, 2004), <https://labornotes.org/2004/08/honduran-teachers-win-month-long-strike-defense-public-education> [accessed 6 January 2021]; Michael McCown, “How Community-College Faculty Organized a Strike and Scored a Contract,” *Labor Notes* (September 7, 2016), <https://labornotes.org/2016/09/how-community-college-faculty-organized-strike-and-scored-contract> [accessed 6 January 2021].

7. Sónia Vaz Borges, *Militant Education, Liberation Struggle, Consciousness: The PAIGC Education in Guinea Bissau 1963–1978* (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Peter Lang, 2019).

8. Julie Leininger Pycior, *Democratic Renewal and the Mutual Aid Legacy of US Mexicans* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014).

9. Linda Wong, *Marginalization and Social Welfare in China* (London, UK: Routledge, 1998).
10. Melissa Ditmore, "In Calcutta, Sex Workers Organize," in *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, ed. Patricia Ticineto Clough with Jean Halley (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 170–86; Young Women's Empowerment Project, *Girls Do What They Have to Do to Survive: Illuminating Methods Used by Girls in the Sex Trade and Street Economy to Fight Back and Heal* (2009), <https://ywepchicago.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/girls-do-what-they-have-to-do-to-survive-a-study-of-resilience-and-resistance.pdf> [accessed 12 January 2021].
11. Morio Onda, "Mutual Help Networks and Social Transformation in Japan," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 72, no. 3 (July 2013): 531–64, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajes.12021>.
12. For discussion of how conflict can play generative, rather than abusive, roles in interpersonal and institutional relationships, see also Sarah Schulman, *Conflict Is Not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility, and the Duty of Repair* (Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2016).
13. For another recent example of shifting focus from individuals to structures in understanding organizations, see Nicola Andrews, "It's Not Imposter Syndrome: Resisting Self-Doubt as Normal for Library Workers," *In the Library with the Lead Pipe* (June 10, 2020), <http://inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2020/its-not-imposter-syndrome/> [accessed 6 January 2021].
14. Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).
15. For a complementary analysis of what counts as "apocalypse," see Audra Mitchell and Aadita Chaudhury, "Worlding Beyond 'the' 'End' of 'the World': White Apocalyptic Visions and BIPOC Futurisms," *International Relations* 34, no. 3 (September 2020): 309–32, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117820948936>.