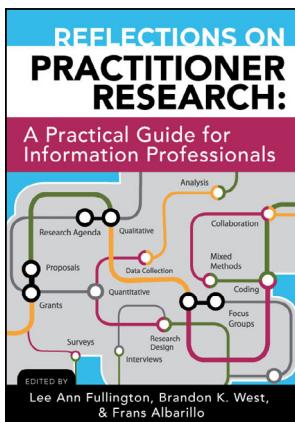


# Book Reviews



*Reflections on Practitioner Research: A Practical Guide for Information Professionals*. Lee Ann Fullington, Brandon K. West, and Frans Albarillo, eds. Chicago, IL: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2020. 290p. Paper, \$78 (ISBN 978-0-8389-4847-7).



In *Reflections on Practitioner Research: A Practical Guide for Information Professionals*, the authors acknowledge that conducting research is often at odds with the service orientation of the library and information science field. Not every library professional who conducts research has had formal training in conducting and publishing research, and so this book aims to serve the practitioner-researcher who is doing this research while working in a public service, whether that work is paid or voluntary, informal or formal. It is refreshing to see this book immediately widen the scope of who is considered a researcher: everyone working in a library setting regardless of type or experience who is pursuing a project can add that title to their list of professional identities. As the editors say in their introduction, the book "celebrates and

tries to draw insights from the messiness of applying research methods" (x) in the face of all the limitations that library professionals experience, including juggling responsibilities, time, and institutional expectations. The chapters are written by a blend of novice and experienced practitioner-researchers from many different types of libraries who were encouraged to write in a first-person perspective "to promote the feeling of having a conversation with a colleague." (xi) The book is thematically organized into three sections that are not designed to be read in a linear progression but rather allow the reader to freely navigate throughout to find guidance relevant for their own research journey. Every chapter describes a research project or technique from start to finish, often describing setbacks or barriers and how the author found a solution. Each chapter ends with a reflection section where the author/s acknowledge/s how the process went, providing recommendations for fellow practitioner-researchers who may be pursuing a similar project or method.

The first section of the book deals with various aspects of the overall research process, from topic selection to research design to time frame. Authors in this section often promote adaptability and activities like journaling to work through the variables that affect and alter research timelines. While some librarians remain at an institution for long periods of time for reasons like tenure, this section acknowledges that many librarians have term or sessional positions and may be concerned with how much time they have to dedicate to research. Authors in this section assuage these concerns by encouraging practitioner-researchers to lay the groundwork of their projects bit by bit. Having a short timeline and a small scale does not make a project less valid, especially if the topic has not been addressed and fills a need in the field. Readers will also learn how to find a research focus as an archivist, methods for scaling a project appropriately, strategies for working with controversial data, and the ethics behind Institutional Review Boards (IRBs).

Section II examines how information professionals use specific qualitative and quantitative research methods in their projects. This part of the book will be particularly useful to practitioner-researchers who want to learn how to conduct surveys, collaborate on gathering and analyzing data, lead interviews, conduct focus groups, code data, and more. Authors do not make assumptions about what the reader may already know, and many will appreciate that terms and methods are explicitly defined and explained. Because the authors all come from different types of libraries and subject specialties, it's interesting to see how research methods are used to serve a variety of user groups, from youth programming in public libraries to research services in health science libraries. Authors share their timelines, organizational techniques, and findings and, most importantly, aren't afraid to talk about their mistakes and failures. By providing honest reflection and transparency, these chapters successfully model teachable moments to encourage library professionals who may feel that they lack the knowledge or experience to conduct their own research.

Section III highlights the ways relationships form and how they can impact the research process. The first chapter in this section, by Villagran and Dalton, discusses the unique challenges that female faculty of color face in the profession while developing research agendas. It's important to note that, while there has been rapid growth in the minority population in the United States, growth in racial diversity is not reflected in librarianship. The authors share their struggles as Black women dealing with the imposter syndrome that marginalized librarians often face when pursuing research in a professional environment that does not reflect their own lived experiences. By reaching out to other librarians of color for mentorship and through working with each other, the authors were able to provide mutual support and grow as practitioner-researchers. Section III offers many valuable examples of collaboration across departments, institutions, and teams.

Knowledge of best practices for conducting library research is often a privilege of those who have been able to take research courses, attend training, or have the temporal and fiscal support of their institution. Not everyone has the means to create a research agenda, use a variety of research methods to conduct a project, or build collaborative relationships, but this book provides an accessible toolkit to learn how. The authors of this book are willing to be vulnerable, using their setbacks as teachable moments, and everyone interested in conducting library research will have something to learn. For practitioner-researchers at any stage of their career, *Reflections on Practitioner Research: A Practical Guide for Information Professionals* is a very helpful handbook for empowering library professionals to successfully pursue meaningful and productive research to support their growth and the field.—Nimisha Bhat, Smith College

**Jelani M. Favors.** *Shelter in a Time of Storm: How Black Colleges Fostered Generations of Leadership and Activism*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2019. 368p. Hardcover, \$29.95 (ISBN 978-1-4696-4833-0).

*Shelter in a Time of Storm* by Jelani M. Favors explores the story of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and how they fostered student activism. In some ways this critical, but often overlooked, aspect of HBCU history has been part of my own understanding of the schools since childhood. I attended preschool and elementary school on the campus of South Carolina State University (SCSU), an HBCU in Orangeburg, South Carolina. My school lay in sight of Smith-Hammond-Middleton Memorial Center, which was named in honor of three students—Henry Smith (19), Samuel Hammond Jr. (18), and Delano Middleton