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Review of *The Academic Librarian's Human Resources Handbook* by David Baldwin

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Book Reviews

Baldwin, David A. *The Academic Librarian's Human Resources Handbook*. Englewood, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1996. 167p. $28.50. (ISBN 1-56308-345-0.) LC 96-19888.

With this book, David Baldwin joins the ranks of numerous authors who have offered personnel management guidance to members of the library profession. In this somewhat crowded field, his work emerges as a thorough, authoritative, and easy-to-use manual which will be of value to fledgling and experienced library managers alike, and particularly to anyone whose institution has not developed an adequate human resources handbook of its own.

Baldwin is Director of Administrative Services at the University of New Mexico General Library. The purpose of his book, as he states in his introduction, is "to provide the busy library manager basic information and background on employee rights and legal parameters of managing library personnel."

The book begins with an overview of the functions of human resources managers, after which it focuses on the legal aspects of human resources management in chapters 2 through 10. The author is particularly concerned with assisting those of us, whether novice or experienced managers, who have a difficult time keeping up with changes in the legal rights and responsibilities of employers and employees. However, because he is aware that a great many librarians have no formal management training, he uses his final chapter to advise us on good management practice by analyzing examples of real human resource management dilemmas that illustrate the issues raised in the preceding chapters.

Although some of Baldwin's advice may strike a few readers as being obvious and plain common sense, it is wisdom that is often neglected when managers and employees become involved in sticky personnel matters.

Baldwin examines nearly every category of important human resource management issues, as may be seen from some of his chapter titles: "Recruitment and Selection of Personnel"; "The Employment Relationship"; "Wage and Hour Laws"; "Employee Benefits"; "Discrimination Laws"; "Health, Safety, and Privacy"; "Discipline and Discharge"; "Income Replacement"; "What to Do before You Phone the Attorney." The only omission that concerns me involves dual employment or "moonlighting." Is the lack of discussion of moonlighting an oversight, or is it no longer an issue that leads some supervisors to impose restrictions that potentially violate employee rights?

The author has taken care to make it easy for readers to find where to look in this handbook for needed information. It is well indexed, has a thorough table of contents, and is divided into chapters that group personnel issues appropriately. Further, the level of detail Baldwin provides about personnel management issues and laws is well suited to a handbook: the information is just deep and lengthy enough that in only a few minutes the reader can glean the essentials and understand the relevant laws and principles without getting bogged down in unfamiliar jargon or confusing legal technicalities. For those who wish to investigate the issues further, he includes lengthy bibliographies at the end of each chapter.

Baldwin writes lucidly and provides clear, concise explanations of human resource management terms and concepts, both within the text and in the fine

appended glossary. His overview of "disparate treatment" on pages 60 and 61 is an excellent example of the skill with which he summarizes laws and principles governing personnel matters.

As part of his discussion, Baldwin offers a number of useful lists containing important precepts, tendencies to avoid, warning signs of potential problems, steps to be taken under certain circumstances, and so on. Particularly noteworthy lists are "Steps to Take before Terminating an Employee," the summary of traits that employees like least about their managers and the attitudes necessary to be a good manager.

In short, this is an exemplary work with which I can find few faults. Of course, a handbook dealing with legal matters will inevitably include some information that becomes outdated quickly. For example, Baldwin tells us the minimum wage is $4.25 per hour, but subsequent to his book's publication, Congress has passed a minimum wage increase. Nevertheless, in my view the important management and legal principles and guidance the author dispenses will never be obsolete.—*W. Bede Mitchell, Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina.*

Lacy, Dan. *From Grunts to Gigabytes: Communications and Society.* Urbana, Ill.: Univ. of Illinois Pr., 1996. 193p. $29.95 cloth (ISBN 0-252-02228-9); $13.95 paper (ISBN 0-252-06531-X). LC 95-32512.

Few would find fault with the statement that begins Dan Lacy's latest book on communications and society: "the patterns of skills and technologies with which humans have been able to communicate have profoundly affected the societies in which they have lived." From the moment the first words were spoken between two humans, modes of communication in society have affected the creation and distribution of power,

the structuring of society, and "our internal perceptions of reality."

From Grunts to Gigabytes is a concise, well-written synthesis of what is known of the emergence of communication systems in Western society. Beginning with the human capacity for speech and its transformation into communities held together by orality, Lacy traces the history of communication in European and Anglo-American cultures along a single line: from oral to written culture, and from writing to printing, and the emergence of new media in the late 1800s through the twentieth century. He is at his best in his lucid discussion of the impact of print on Western society and its endurance during the modern era of audiovisual and electronic media.

Of greater consequence, *From Grunts to Gigabytes* is more of a provocative treatise on the relationship between communication and power in society than it is a history of the book. Lacy's portrayal of the impact that new and emergent technologies have had on the public sphere are central to his thesis. From one chapter to the next, he illustrates how power is associated with access and control of new forms of communication. Although he does not allege that access and control of communication systems necessarily create power, there is a convincing argument presented for the centrality of communication as a tool for empowerment, and this is evident throughout his analysis of the interaction between communication and public policy. For instance, Lacy considers the relationship between church and state in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe in regulating and licensing printers and, by extension, controlling what was actually published. When discussing the appearance of audiovisual media in the twentieth century, he also uses government (Federal Communications Commission) and industry (Motion Picture Association of