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Book Review:

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Crawford begins this ALA Special Report by defining open access (OA) literature as "available online to be read for free by anyone, anytime, anywhere" (1). His goals are to outline some of the issues surrounding this seemingly simple concept, suggest ways librarians can advocate for OA, and guide librarians to resources for learning more and staying up-to-date on OA.

In the first chapter, Crawford discusses why all librarians should care about OA. OA focuses on research literature, which Crawford acknowledges is of particular concern to academic and some special librarians, who serve the researchers and practitioners who use this literature. He points out that not all researchers and scholars are affiliated with institutions, so public libraries also may be called on to supply patrons with research literature. Public libraries also receive requests for research literature from patrons with special interests. While school children are unlikely to seek research literature, school librarians as citizens should care about OA. Crawford outlines ethical and pragmatic arguments for OA, including eliminating wealth as a barrier to information, providing citizens with access to research funded by taxes, improving communication between researchers, and disseminating research findings broadly for testing and validation. OA also has the potential to alleviate the problems caused by rapid price increases for science, technology, engineering, and medical (STEM) journals, which consume a disproportionate and growing share of academic and special library budgets, although Crawford acknowledges that alleviating cost pressures requires bargaining by an influential and determined library system or the availability of a critical mass of OA journals. Crawford's brief description of the 2010 negotiation between the University of California and Nature Publishing Group is a powerful example of the difficulties libraries have in bargaining with STEM publishers. I have one minor quibble with this chapter: I wish Crawford's excellent explanation of how copyright is transferred in scholarly journal publishing had appeared much earlier in the chapter.

In the second chapter, Crawford discusses key documents, defines terms, and provides some history to help readers understand how the concept of OA has changed and may continue to change. He describes and quotes from three documents: the Budapest Open Access Initiative, the Bethesda Statement on Open Access Publishing, and the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities, which established the term "open access" in 2002. Crawford points out that OA, as defined in these documents, includes more than simply reading research literature: the authors of these documents envision additional distribution, data mining, and other uses as components of open access. Crawford also introduces the terms Green OA, Gold OA, Gratis OA, and Libre OA, provides brief definitions of each, then discusses the state of OA in 2010 in relation to each of these terms. Throughout the discussion, he deftly explains related terms, such as preprint, which may be unfamiliar to some readers. He also introduces some of the major figures in the OA movement.
In the third chapter, Crawford discusses issues in need of further study. Issues related to OA journals include what qualifies as an OA journal, the extent to which OA journals can compete with subscription journals for the best articles, viable funding methods for stable OA journals, journal transitions from subscription to OA, problems with OA publishing scams, and even whether alternatives to journals, such as blogs, are feasible. Other OA issues include determining the costs of running an OA repository, the question of whether institutional or subject repositories are preferable, concerns with preservation and long-term access, the extent to which libraries provide access points for OA journals and articles in repositories, and the point at which libraries will begin seeing savings from OA. Crawford points out that as of 2010 about 20 percent of recent research articles are OA - he suggests that 75 percent OA may be the tipping point where libraries either abandon Big Deals or can use the availability of OA journals as a bargaining point for lower prices. He comments that the gradual movement to OA may seem quite slow, but will continue to grow.

The fourth chapter discusses controversies and pseudo-controversies. Crawford discusses the significant differences of opinion surrounding questions, such as the value that publishers add to scholarly articles, what it should cost to produce an online journal, whether or to what extent complete OA would save money, whether "delayed OA" makes sense or simply prolongs subscription journals, whether green or gold OA is preferable, whether OA journals that do not charge author-side fees are sustainable, and whether institutional mandates for depositing articles in repositories are effective. He also discusses some pseudo-controversies, myths, and misunderstandings that are cited as arguments against OA, such as OA undermines peer review, author-side fees taint the reliability of peer review, author-side fees prevent some researchers from publishing, and author-side fees disadvantage scholars who live in developing nations. Crawford also notes in this chapter inaccurate claims that online publishing is free; concerns that funding allocated for OA will greatly lessen funding for research; and arguments such as interlibrary loan makes research articles available to everyone, laymen should not have access to research because it might confuse them, and OA weakens copyright. The succinct but clear discussion of controversies alone makes this book valuable to librarians as a quick reference for questions from faculty and arguments from opponents to OA.

The fifth chapter suggests some actions librarians can take to support OA. Crawford lists five areas of concern for all librarians: understanding OA, communicating with community, encouraging discovery of OA articles, considering OA options when writing for publication, and keeping up-to-date as OA changes. Next, he discusses eight items that librarians should discuss with faculty and other researchers. He mentions institutional repositories, OA mandates, OA publishing, and OA funds for author-side fees as activities that some libraries may be involved with or may consider supporting. The chapter closes by encouraging librarians to consider researching OA issues and offers some questions that need to be addressed.

The final chapter recommends resources for learning more about OA and for remaining up-to-date on OA issues. In what may be the most valuable chapter of the book, Crawford annotates twenty-eight articles from the hundreds of newsletters, blogs, books,
and other resources on OA. He provides lengthy annotations for five key sources, describing the content, authorship, update frequency, and extent of each. Most of the remaining items are annotated in four or five lines, with a focus on why the resource is useful. Crawford also indicates which resources espouse particular viewpoints.

Crawford's book fully meets its goals. It is a readable introduction to OA, clarifying major terms and introducing important people and issues in the OA movement. While it is directed at librarians and library science students, both laypersons and scholars in other fields could read and understand it. A detailed index, logical layout, and frequent headings throughout the text make it valuable as a reference for librarians discussing OA with faculty and administrators. Highly recommended for academic and large public libraries; recommended for all libraries and for library science students.