

Keeping Up with New Legal Titles*

Compiled by Benjamin J. Keele** and Nick Sexton***

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* The works reviewed in this issue were published in 2018. If you would like to review books for "Keeping Up with New Legal Titles," please send an email to sdemaine@iu.edu and azyndar.1@osu.edu.

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Chase, Ashley Krenelka, ed. *Millennial Leadership in Libraries*. Getzville, N.Y.: William S. Hein & Co., 2018. 453p. \$99.

*Reviewed by Lora Johns**

¶6 Type the words “Millennials are killing . . .” into Google Search, and the autocomplete feature will suggest everything from “capitalism” to “mayonnaise.” They have taken the blame for the death of at least 70 commodities and industries—doorbells, golf, diamonds, restaurants, brick-and-mortar retail—in short, “everything.”¹

¶7 The one institution Millennials have not murdered is the library. Instead, they have revived it: Millennials frequent their public libraries more than any other adult generation.² They expect libraries to provide not just books but information literacy, community outreach, and opportunities for learning and creativity.³ As Millennial librarians eye leadership positions, the old guard must acknowledge the lofty aspirations they bring to librarianship—and the reality that both the profession and its up-and-coming workforce have been irreversibly reshaped by the Great Recession. Millennials are “killing” old institutions and practices because the world has changed, and they have adapted a new way of living in it.

¶8 *Millennial Leadership in Libraries*, edited by Ashley Krenelka Chase, targets library professionals from every age group, from the Silent Generation to Millennials. It is a collage of chapters roughly organized into a pentaptych, each section painting a separate but interrelated portrait: why libraries need Millennial leadership; intergenerational conflict; Millennial skills and leadership styles; recruiting Millennials; and Millennial career planning. At the same time, it seeks to persuade older professionals to accept the inevitable transformation accompanying the march of time and to inspire the younger generation to embrace or even accelerate it. The Baby Boomers who currently dominate library leadership will find assurances that Millennials are not so different from them after all—or, if they are, the library can tame their unruly tendencies and leverage their unique aptitudes into benefits. For the Millennials, the book describes a future in which their leadership transforms libraries into bastions of equal access to information, diversity, social justice, and innovation—if they toe the line between traditionalism and progressivism.

¶9 At the heart of all libraries lies a long-standing tension: simultaneous pulls toward tradition and toward progress. Indeed, the very introduction to this book hints at this dichotomy—and especially at the fear of change. The editor, a self-described Millennial, writes almost apologetically that “whether any of us like it or

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1. Amanda Cioletti, *Millennials are Killing Everything*, LICENSE GLOBAL, Oct. 2017, at 6.

2. Abigail Geiger, *Millennials are the Most Likely Generation of Americans to Use Public Libraries*, PEW RESEARCH CENTER (June 21, 2017), <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/06/21/millennials-are-the-most-likely-generation-of-americans-to-use-public-libraries/> [https://perma.cc/XK8E-VUR3]; Abigail Geiger, *Most Americans—Especially Millennials—Say Libraries Can Help Them Find Reliable, Trustworthy Information*, PEW RESEARCH CENTER (Aug. 30, 2017), <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/08/30/most-americans-especially-millennials-say-libraries-can-help-them-find-reliable-trustworthy-information/> [https://perma.cc/A2SU-V4Q9].

3. John B. Horrigan, *Libraries 2016*, PEW RESEARCH CENTER (Sept. 9, 2016), <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/09/09/2016/Libraries-2016/> [https://perma.cc/6JT4-JPKE].

not, ‘the Millennials are coming’” (p.xii). Indeed, a motif that ties together even the most disparate chapters is wariness: toward Millennials, toward Baby Boomers, toward change, toward staying the same.

¶10 While the book purports to be a guide for and about librarians of a certain age, the generational angle is less central to its core message than its title implies. The just-so explanations for why Millennials behave as they do belie this theme by contradicting one another: Millennials need too much hand holding and request too much feedback, but at the same time they are independent self-starters. Millennials lack work ethic, yet they are highly committed and motivated and eagerly seek out professional development. Such incongruous assertions suggest that these traits are not attributable to the age group per se. To their credit, many chapters point out that using such a broad brush to color a generation spanning a quarter of a century grossly oversimplifies matters. As one contributor points out, “in general, people are people” (p.xxiii).

¶11 Much like the Myers-Briggs personality test attempts to group nuanced individuals into easily generalizable “types,” reducing Millennials to a set of vague characteristics provides a comforting, if not wholly accurate, framework for grappling with large, unwieldy issues.⁴ Fixating on teasing out the precise differences between generations threatens to obscure the bigger picture: librarians’ concerns and aspirations for the profession’s future. The lens of generational differences, then, provides the greatest analytical value when we use it to elucidate the real issues underlying points of intergenerational conflict. The most salient concerns revolve around questions of hierarchy and teamwork; loyalty and lack of job security; structural and cultural issues like lack of transparency; stereotypes and underrepresentation of women in library leadership; and economic pressures leading to personnel problems. More optimistically, some chapters envisage a future of better life balance, lifelong learning and continuing individual growth, increasing technological savoir-faire, and passionate activism for social justice issues like access to information and community service. *Millennial Leadership in Libraries* is at its strongest when it addresses these broader themes, for instance by engaging in serious self-reflection on the past and future of workplace culture and identity, or by exhorting Millennials to envision—and create—a better, more inclusive workplace, especially for women and other underrepresented minorities.

¶12 Many contributors write with a tone of hesitancy or insecurity when contemplating generations other than their own. The majority at least mention mentorship as a tool to resolve conflicts and achieve goals. Indeed, most tout it as a powerful corrective to the tensions between the old managers (accustomed to strict hierarchies, institutional loyalty, and ladder climbing) and the new leaders (who tend toward collaborative work, lateral moves, and diffuse responsibilities). The book’s strategies for intergenerational mentoring promise to both raise new librarians into leadership positions and decrease the fear and friction between generations.

¶13 While mentoring certainly has a role to play, it cannot solve every problem. For one thing, it cannot increase opportunities for traditional advancement as man-

4. See, e.g., David J. Pittenger, *Measuring the MBTI . . . And Coming Up Short*, 54 J. CAREER PLANNING & EMPL. 48 (1993) (explaining that MBTI results were highly variable over time and therefore a poor basis for drawing significant conclusions about personality).

agement positions are eliminated and seasoned librarians postpone retirement. Thus, several valuable chapters urge Millennials to make a plan for creating informal leadership opportunities even under suboptimal conditions and developing a personal career philosophy to guide them through the trials to come—and help them remember why they wanted to become library leaders in the first place.

¶14 Whether a veteran manager seeking reassurance or advice on mentoring the next generation, or a budding Millennial leader seeking concrete guidance on how to build a meaningful and fulfilling career in the changing library landscape, *Millennial Leadership in Libraries* offers something of value for everyone who cares about librarianship's future.

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5. 411 U.S. 677 (1973).