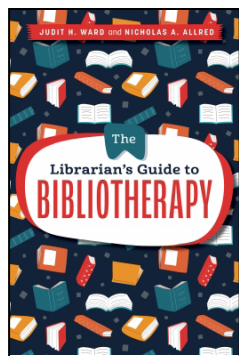


that another author wore to his Pulitzer Prize ceremony with the anticipation of wearing it in the same circumstance one day in the future (p. 87), and another about a bestselling literary fiction author and industry insider both advocating for black authors and being treated like a “race traitor” by some black editors (p. 112).

Because the book is organized by publishing sector rather than chronology, Sinykin repeats some pivotal events to provide historical touchstones, such as Random House firing long-reigning president Robert Bernstein in 1989 and, soon after, André Schiffrin, another company stalwart. Despite this useful convention of orienting milestones, the inclusion of a timeline with the book’s end matter, along with the existing glossary of publishing figures, would have provided readers with an additional tool to help place the industry’s complex history in time and context.

Overall, the book is highly recommended for academic libraries supporting American studies, history, and literature researchers. The author provides an illuminating and riveting examination of American fiction publishing and challenges the reader to look closer at oft-repeated assessments within the field. The book also creates a strong foundation for future works to further expand on areas that Sinykin either deliberately omitted (such as non-fiction and international fiction publishing) or trends that are still very much in the process of emerging. —Marilyn Reside, *Electronic Resources Librarian*, CUNY Graduate Center

The Librarian’s Guide to Bibliotherapy, Judit H. Ward and Nicholas A. Allred, ALA Editions, 2024. Softcover. 224p. 9780838936627. \$49.99.



Avid readers know the feeling of being emotionally affected by books, of seeing their experiences reflected in a way that helps them reach greater understanding, or of encountering new perspectives that help them cultivate empathy. Books can bring readers solace, inspiration, guidance, and even wisdom. The insight at the core of bibliotherapy is that these benefits are not confined to chance, private encounters between individual readers and their books. By choosing texts intentionally, providing context, or asking thought-provoking questions, clinicians can guide patients in deriving therapeutic value from the experience of reading.

Replace “clinicians” with “librarians” and “patients” with “patrons,” and some aspects of bibliotherapy can be implemented in a library setting. Of course, bibliotherapy as a library service absolutely should not be confused with bibliotherapy as a treatment approach in a clinical setting. Librarians are rarely qualified, to say nothing of licensed, to practice mental health care, and an enriching library program is not an adequate substitute for formal counseling (51). The authors are careful to emphasize this distinction to the librarians who read this guide. Likewise, librarians offering bibliotherapy-informed programming should take similar care to communicate the distinction to their participants.

But with that caveat firmly in place, Ward and Allred argue that librarians possess many bibliotherapy-adjacent abilities already (xvi). Librarians who answer reference questions or perform readers’ advisory are skilled in using their collections to meet their patrons’ intellectual and recreational needs. Implementing bibliotherapy-informed programming entails concentrating instead on patrons’ emotional or therapeutic needs, but significant parts of the experience transfer. The authors use the term “accidental bibliotherapists” to refer to librarians whose work sometimes includes helping patrons find reading material that might serve

a therapeutic purpose—books about addiction and recovery or navigating family challenges, for example. Their goal with this guide is to help “accidental bibliotherapists” become “*intentional bibliotherapy-informed librarians* [emphasis added]” (8).

Ward is a science librarian at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, and was previously director of information services at the Rutgers Center of Alcohol Studies. In that role, she developed the bibliotherapy-inspired “Reading for Recovery” program. Allred is a visiting assistant professor of English at Fairfield University in Fairfield, Connecticut, and has extensive experience collaborating on bibliotherapy-inspired projects. Five short sections of the book are credited to other contributors.

The book is organized around the stages of planning, conducting, and marketing bibliotherapy-informed programs. The authors describe multiple possibilities, such as passive programming (i.e., book displays, social media posts, and recommended reading lists) as well as active programming (i.e., one-on-one reader’s advisory or large group events). The authors provide advice on selecting the techniques and formats that are most likely to reach a given group of patrons—for example, deciding which events would be more successful in person and which should be offered virtually. The introduction recommends mining the book for relevant guidance, rather than reading it cover-to-cover, and its organization facilitates that approach. Individual chapters don’t quite stand alone, but readers with specific goals in mind will be able to find applicable sections without necessarily reading the entirety by referring to the book’s index.

Many of the practicalities of planning and marketing bibliotherapy-informed events will be familiar to librarians who have organized and hosted other large group events. One of the book’s strengths is that it contains several detailed tables distinguishing between bibliotherapy and other types of library programming. For example, the chapter “Setting Up Bibliotherapy-Infused Programs” identifies six aspects in which traditional book discussion groups and bibliotherapy-centered programs differ. While the goal of the former is to “discuss a book, story, or text for pleasure during the session,” the goal of the latter is to “reflect on texts for individual therapeutic benefits after session” (82).

Choosing books that are likely to yield “the salutary effects of reading on mental health” (3) is pivotal to any successful bibliotherapy-informed programming. The book describes working with a few specific texts although detailed discussion of a large number of titles is beyond its scope. However, it does recommend other published guides that delve into possible resources. It also contains guidance on selecting materials and matching books to their intended audiences, including outlining how choosing books for bibliotherapy differs from choosing them for other purposes.

Although the authors developed their own bibliotherapy-informed programs in an academic library setting, the *Librarian’s Guide to Bibliotherapy* is likely to be of value to public libraries as well. The book is recommended for anyone who is new to bibliotherapy and interested in practical guidance on a variety of approaches. —Molly Strothmann, Professor, Library Collections Strategist, Oklahoma State University