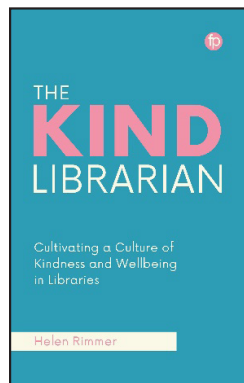


The Kind Librarian: Cultivating a Culture of Kindness and Wellbeing in Libraries, Helen Rimmer, Facet Publishing (UK), 2024. 400p. Softcover, \$66.99. 9781783307128



The Kind Librarian: Cultivating a Culture of Kindness and Wellbeing in Libraries, by Helen Rimmer, is an informative and appealing text for librarians at all institutions and all leadership levels. As a former library administrator and the founder and current owner of The Kind Brave Leader, Rimmer brings unique expertise and recommendations to the library world. *The Kind Librarian* is well-researched and approachable, incorporating reflective questions and exercises, both for groups and individuals, at the end of each chapter designed to spark conversation and collaboration. With its blend of theory and practice, Rimmer's book provides plenty of opportunity for librarians and staff to learn and grow. Case studies provide examples from a variety of library sectors and enhance the applicability of concepts the author cov-

ers. This book primarily appeals to library leadership and patron-facing librarians because of their roles in management and customer service. Rimmer suggests that librarians in these roles often face burnout and that applying principles of kindness could help relieve the effects of stress and difficult work environments. Developing a culture of kindness also has the potential of helping libraries better serve their patrons and communities.

This book is split into four parts: "Theoretical Foundations of Kindness in Libraries as Workplaces," "Cultivating Kindness in the Library: A Holistic Approach to Wellbeing and Team Empowerment," "Leadership Approaches to Enhancing Kindness and Wellbeing in Libraries," and "Embracing Kindness and Wellbeing in Library Cultures: Navigating Change and Toxicity." Readers could skip to sections they think would be most beneficial; however, it would be better to start with part one and progress through the sections as presented as several frameworks introduced at the beginning provide the support for further arguments in subsequent segments. The majority of chapters are in parts two and three where theory is applied and kindness is put into practice.

Part One consists of four chapters which introduce the book and provide the theoretical and practical framework for employing kindness and empathy in a professional setting, such as the library. In these chapters, readers learn the differences between being kind and being nice, how kindness and positive psychology connect with wellbeing, and four different models of thinking about staff wellbeing. These four models are interwoven threads that ground the rest of the book and are the lenses through which recommended changes are viewed.

Part Two, with seven chapters, is the longest section. These chapters emphasize the integration of wellness practice into the library workplace. Each chapter addresses various aspects of library operations, such as writing and enforcing policies, or using flexible work schedules/options (e.g., hybrid modalities) to support library workers. Part Two is most relevant for people working outside of management and administration because these chapters have practical applications valuable in any team or location. The suggestions are also potentially easier for anyone, from librarians to upper management to recommend or practice. The last chapter in this part is written by Kirsten Elliott and Darren Flynn about their Fair Library Jobs grassroots

organization and how the authors view embedding kindness, empathy, and equity in library hiring and recruitment practices.

Part Three contains five chapters about various aspects of leadership and management, making it the most relevant section for library leadership and least applicable to library workers without management or supervisory responsibilities. Highlights of Part Three include chapters on effective conflict resolution strategies, diverse leadership styles, and the use of data for supporting wellbeing and leadership practices.

Part Four synthesizes the previous three sections and covers topics such as toxic work environments, managing change, and the future of kindness in libraries. This is the shortest but most hopeful section of the book, once again helpful to anyone in librarianship seeking to incorporate more kindness and empathy into their own organization.

Ultimately, *The Kind Librarian* is a valuable guide full of applicable reflection questions and activities for incorporating kindness, empathy, and holistic wellness into a library work environment. All these concepts can be applied by anyone on any level at any kind of library, which is the book's most appealing point. Occasionally, chapters feel redundant as the frameworks and steps often overlap even when dealing with different topics, such as conflict resolution or a toxic work environment. The repetitiveness is useful, though, for readers who skip to the specific sections most applicable to them or their workplace. The book is best for managers, or for informal leaders, who are trying to make healthy cultural changes in their workplaces.— *Clarissa Ihssen, American University*