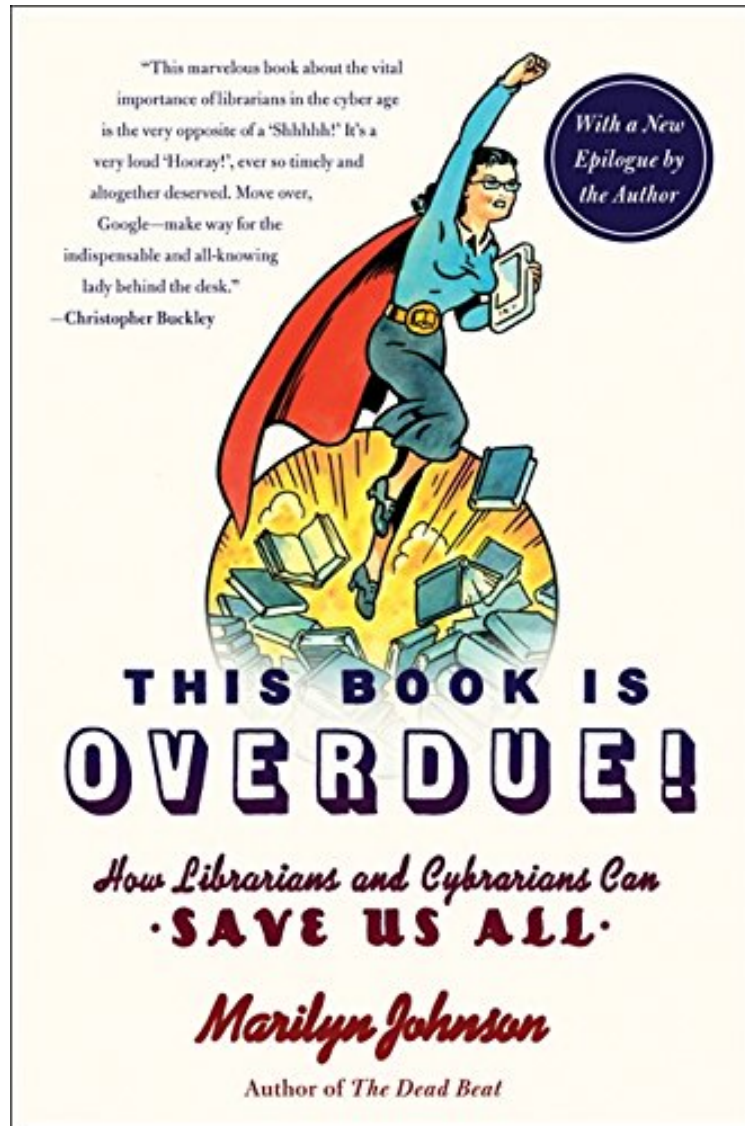


(Free pdf) This Book Is Overdue!: How Librarians and Cybrarians Can Save Us All

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Marilyn Johnson

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Marilyn Johnson : This Book Is Overdue!: How Librarians and Cybrarians Can Save Us All before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised This Book Is Overdue!: How Librarians and Cybrarians Can Save Us All:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Dances frivolously around its subjectBy Karl JanssenIm currently

working toward an MLS degree in the hopes of becoming a librarian. When I found out about Marilyn Johnson's 2011 book, *This Book is Overdue! How Librarians and Cybrarians Can Save Us All*, I was excited to read it. I was hoping it would provide a behind-the-scenes look at the profession and some serious examination of the issues facing librarians today. The subtitle implies that the book will cover some of the important work being done by librarians and information professionals, while perhaps also indulging in some welcome boosterism for an often underappreciated profession. While Johnson is an avid cheerleader for libraries and approaches her subject with enthusiasm, overall I was disappointed with her take on librarianship. There is a long-standing stereotype of librarians as frumpy nerds, and Johnson is hell-bent on dispelling that erroneous notion. Unfortunately, her way of going about this is to devote an inordinate amount of words to the physical appearance and social lives of librarians, trying to convince us that they're cool. They have tattoos! And mod retro haircuts! They wear sexy clothes and cats-eye glasses! They throw wild theme parties and eat funky food and let their freak flags fly! What it all adds up to is an annoying and distracting catalog of quirks. In an interminably long chapter on the social network Second Life, Johnson lovingly describes the hairdo and accessories of each and every avatar, yet fails to convince the reader that anything of value or of use is taking place in this virtual world. Another chapter on librarian bloggers makes these professionals sound like a bunch of petty, feuding high schoolers. Librarians aren't nerds; we get it already. What's really cool about librarians is the important work that they do, and often while reading Johnson's book you wonder if these hip librarians are getting anything done at all. When she does focus on the work, the results are mixed. A chapter about a library system undergoing a software migration, for example, is about as exciting as it sounds. Thankfully, there are some bright points. In Chapter 5, she interviews the Connecticut Four, a group of librarians who refused to release patron borrowing records to the federal government, in knowing violation of the USA PATRIOT Act. Chapter 6 covers a program by librarians at St. Johns University to train their counterparts from third world countries. These chapters were both pretty good, but it wasn't really until Chapters 10 and 11 (out of 12) that I felt like I was getting the book I had hoped for. In Chapter 10 she delves into the backstage workings of the New York Public Library and weighs the pros and cons of recent changes they've made in their organization and practices. Chapter 11 examines the profession of archivism. With so much information, what's worth preserving, who's going to preserve it, and how does it get preserved? These two chapters quite thoughtfully investigate the kinds of real-life issues and problems that librarians are faced with every day. Despite my complaints, I'm glad Johnson wrote this book because the general public needs to know more about what exactly librarians do. I wonder, though, how many nonlibrarians will read it. Professional librarians will enjoy Johnson's positive take on their field, but won't gain much new information from it. The ideal audience seems to be wannabe librarians like me. Johnson's latest book, *Lives in Ruins*, tackles another fascinating subject, archaeology. I was looking forward to diving into that one, but after reading *This Book is Overdue!* I'm now worried it'll just be a book about a bunch of hip, quirky nonconformists who only happen to be archaeologists.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Wanted to like it but unable to finish it. Writing was very poor. I could not relate to the super-hip jet set librarians flying to conferences and conventions as if they were celebrities, researchers, foreign service officers, etc., whatever the author fantasied. Could have used a good editor. Sorry.

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Librarians and friends of libraries will appreciate this, but overall a disappointment. While the global economic climate remains volatile, and Internet giants like Google and Facebook seem to be all but taking over the planet, those of us in centuries-old professions are fighting to stay relevant. This is the impetus behind author and editor Marilyn Johnson's 2010 publication *This Book is Overdue*. In this latest work of nonfiction, Johnson, who also penned *The Dead Beat*, offers up some humorous in-depth investigative reporting on the misunderstood and underappreciated culture of librarians, painting them as high-tech heroes in an era where budget cuts are threatening cultural institutions, and "information sickness" is fast becoming an epidemic (Johnson evokes the imaginary disease from Ted Mooney's 1981 novel *Easy Travel to Other Planets*). Shedding light on the current issues facing libraries in an era of digital information overload, Johnson debunks the matronly shushing stereotype with accounts of Second Life avatar librarians and tattooed hipster librarians delivering "street reference" with iPhones to protestors during the 2008 Republican National Convention. However, not everyone will share Johnson's level of enthusiasm for these renegade tech-savvy librarians, or "cybrarians," and at times, Johnson is so entrenched in anecdote that the book loses some momentum and focus. Chapter 11, for example, is almost thirty pages of forgettable stories about archives materials and reads much like Nicolson Baker's equally fanatical 2001 book *Double Fold*. Nevertheless, Johnson's good intentions outweigh these shortcomings, and librarians and library lovers alike will find value in this book that asserts, "In tough times, a librarian is a terrible thing to waste."

Buried in info? Cross-eyed over technology? From the bottom of a pile of paper, disks, books, e-books, and scattered thumb drives comes a cry of hope: Make way for the librarians—they can help! Those who predicted the death of libraries forgot to consider that, in the automated maze of contemporary life, none of us expert and hopelessly baffled alike can get along without human help. And not just any help: we need librarians, the only ones who can save us from being buried by the digital age. *This Book Is Overdue!* is a romp through the ranks of information professionals from the blunt and obscenely funny bloggers to the quiet, law-abiding librarians gagged by the FBI. These are the pragmatic

idealists who fuse the tools of the digital age with their love for the written word and the enduring values of free speech, open access, and scout-badge-quality assistance to anyone in need.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . In an information age full of Google-powered searches, free-by-Bittorrent media downloads and Wiki-powered knowledge databases, the librarian may seem like an antiquated concept. Author and editor Johnson (*The Dead Beat*) is here to reverse that notion with a topical, witty study of the vital ways modern librarians uphold their traditional roles as educators, archivists, and curators of a community legacy. Illuminating the state of the modern librarian with humor and authority, Johnson showcases librarians working on the cutting edge of virtual reality simulations, guarding the Constitution and redefining information services—as well as working hard to serve and satisfy readers, making this volume a bit guilty of long-form reader flattery. Johnson also makes the important case for libraries—the brick-and-mortar kind—as an irreplaceable bridge crossing economic community divides. Johnson's wry report is a must-read for anyone who's used a library in the past quarter century. From Bookmarks Magazine As book lovers themselves, reviewers happily joined Johnson in librarian hero worship. They were consistently impressed by her enthusiasm for her subject and entertained by her anecdotes about the challenges librarians face on a daily basis. Opinions differed, however, over Johnson's idea that librarians will guide us to a new era of literacy online. No one doubted the valor of Johnson's "cybrarians," but some asked if she was sufficiently critical of the drawbacks of moving information online—from the decline in American attention spans to missing the smell of a good old-fashioned binding. Enjoy this book for its look at library culture, not for its prognostications. From Booklist Contemporary librarians are morphing into undisputed masters of the information cosmos. An Internet-savvy, database-crunching cohort of multimedia manipulators passionately dedicated to empowering the data-deprived, they democratically distribute all the fruits of the emerging hypertext universe. Johnson's paean to this new generation of librarians demolishes superannuated myths and stereotypes of fusty librarians filing catalog cards and collecting fines for overdue books, and replaces that with a vision of the profession's future where librarians serve as guardians and guides to information in cyberspace. These rock-star librarians maneuver their way through a labyrinthine network of glowing computer-terminal screens to retrieve whatever answers patrons may seek. If that's not high calling enough, librarians stand tall as superhero sentinels bravely beating back every assault on civil liberties and Constitutional government. Johnson offers portraits of American librarians, both institutional and freelance, already achieving fame as cybrarians and informationists, and she affirms and celebrates their conquests. Take that, Nicholson Baker! --Mark Knoblach