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## Book Review: The Embedded Librarian's Cookbook

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## THE EMBEDDED LIBRARIAN'S COOKBOOK

*edited by Kaijsa Calkins &  
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If this title sounds familiar, it is; this book is the second in a series of “cookbooks” published by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). The preceding title, Sittler and Cook’s *The Library Instruction Cookbook* (2009), provided a collection of recipes for various types of instruction sessions. Calkins and Kvenild note that a positive response to that book launched this current title (p. vii), and you may also recognize the editors from their 2011 title, *Embedded Librarians: Moving Beyond One-Shot Instruction*.

This new work adopts the charming, easily digestible format of its predecessor and brings together short, practical examples of various approaches that librarians have taken to embed instruction in course and program curricula. Here, again, each librarian-contributed instruction initiative example is formatted as a recipe, with subheadings for “nutrition information” (summary and background details), “serves” (the recommended number of

students), and “cooking time” (the time required for preparation and/or the embedded instruction undertaking). The “allergy warnings” are particularly helpful, providing cautions from each contributing librarian as to what may go wrong, or what that instructor would do differently next time. A “chefs’ note” in each recipe provides a session summary or reflective commentary.

This recipe format is a nice fit for some of the examples; however, it feels somewhat contrived in other cases, where a more straightforward description might be preferable. Overall, however, this convention works, helping the reader scan for teaching situations that are similar to their own and activities and projects that they could adapt locally. The book is broken into two parts, with the first six sections organizing “bite sized” sessions, First Year Experience projects, general instruction ideas, discipline-specific instruction examples, case examples specific to online courses, and examples for embedding activities within the campus community at large. While readers are likely to appreciate the extensive variety of examples, I found the assignment of cases to these six sections somewhat mystifying; certainly some of the recipes could be assigned to multiple sections. A second, much shorter portion of the book provides concrete examples of assessment and planning activities that could be used to measure and maintain an embedded initiative over the long term, two important

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considerations. This organization includes a detailed table of contents; however, an index and a summary list of contributors (along with brief biographical statements and institutional affiliations) would be welcome additions.

The cookbook metaphor is not restricted to this series, nor to librarianship; a quick search of my library's catalog revealed, for example, *The Information Literacy Cookbook: Ingredients, Recipes and Tips for Success* (Secker, Boden, & Price, 2007) and *The Literacy Cookbook: A Practical Guide to Effective Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening Instruction* (Tantillo, 2013). Practical texts can help librarians reinvigorate their instruction and consider new ways to embed themselves in the communities that they serve. While there are not many groundbreaking ideas to be found here, most of the recipes included in this book contain helpfully detailed instruction on how to replicate the instruction session or initiative, even providing worksheet examples in select cases. Some instruction examples are very specific to the situation described (e.g. instruction for middle-school students at a debate camp), however other recipes are much more adaptable. Certainly, many librarians who teach will be able to glean new ideas, find inspiration for improving their current practices, or take comfort in parallels between their own efforts and the examples collected here.

The editors are careful to avoid suggesting that *The Embedded Librarian's Cookbook* is intended for academic libraries; however, it is worth noting that all but three of the librarian contributors are affiliated with US academic institutions. The recipes are for

the most part appropriate for university and college students, and adaption for other audiences and circumstances would require some imagination. A few small typos and minor layout issues do not take away from the extent of examples presented (55 case studies in all), which the cookbook convention encourages the reader to digest in small meals. Overall, I would recommend this book for academic librarians who are looking for new ways to embed instruction in courses or programs, or who are simply seeking new instruction ideas.

*Published: Chicago, IL: Association of College & Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association, 2014.*

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