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# Review of Becoming an Embedded Librarian: Making Connections in the Classroom

Kelli Johnson EdD

*Marshall University*, johnson28@marshall.edu

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**Michelle Reale.** *Becoming an Embedded Librarian: Making Connections in the Classroom.*

Chicago: ALA Editions, 2016. 128p. Paper, \$54.00 (ISBN 978-0-8389-1367-3).

Though the concept of the embedded librarian is not a new one, it still can draw looks of bewilderment or disbelief in faculty and librarians alike. Librarians may ask: Should I embed in a class? How do I go about it? How can I convince faculty to buy into the concept? Many faculty members have never heard the phrase at all. However, if you are looking to clear the fog around this interesting and important concept in library services, Michelle Reale's book is a coherent and well-organized discussion of the various aspects of embedded librarianship reinforced with details of her personal experiences as well as lists of practical strategies.

Reale begins her book by laying a foundation for the reader, discussing traditional librarianship as well as the disconnect inherent in the librarian/faculty relationship that had led to the emergence of embedded librarianship as an alternative to traditional library instruction. Librarians have been struggling with the challenge of explaining to faculty the importance of information literacy for many years.

Next, Reale takes a fresh approach to defining what it means to be a librarian embedded in a class. We know that being embedded means being within and of the class. Reale expands on this idea to include not only the students whom we are there to teach; she also includes the faculty with whom we are there to collaborate. She sees the classroom as a laboratory — where we can work with faculty and students to develop relationships and where we can apply our knowledge and skills in a meaningful way. Additionally, embedding allows us to form a strong relationship with both students and faculty while we work to address their needs on their turf.

Throughout the book, Reale shares her personal experiences. These anecdotes emphasize the practical advice she gives. For example, in Chapter 5, "Clarifying your Role in the Embedded Classroom," Reale writes about how she initially viewed her role as an embedded librarian. As she began embedding in classes, Reale felt that her presence in the classroom and her willingness to share her knowledge was the "missing piece" that the class needed to be fully in sync. So, upon arrival to her first class where she was fully embedded, she took her seat and smiled. The faculty member reviewed the syllabus. Neither Reale nor the faculty member addressed why she was there or even who she was. Although she had met the students before in her capacity as the English department liaison, since her role was never defined, the students in the class were never quite sure what she could or could not do for them. Spelling out the librarian's function at the beginning of class, writes Reale, "will help you to manage your role in relationship to the student support you will be delivering." As she does in other chapters, Reale ends chapter 5 with a list of useful strategies to assist embedded librarians with explaining their roles.

Subsequent chapters in this informative book focus on teaching style, creating communities of practice, facilitating process, setting personal goals, and personal branding. For the most part, these chapters also follow the format of previous chapters. Reale begins each of these chapters with a satisfying conversation consisting of personal recollection frequently enhanced with thoughtful information from noted scholars in both education and librarianship. For example, in chapter 7, "Classroom Embedding Creates Communities of Practice and Possibilities," the author explains Lave and Wenger's learning model and leads us through her journey in creating community in her own classes. She helps construct the community. She guides and mediates. She facilitates collaboration and exploration.

Reale finishes this concise text by summarizing and evaluating her, as she calls it, "odyssey." She shares the ups and downs of her journey in embedded librarianship as well as the results of her reflective and earnest self-assessment. Throughout the book,

the author is straightforward and candid not only in making her suggestions but also in sharing her own experiences. The book will prove to be a practical and enjoyable resource for librarians who are thinking of adding embedded librarianship to their instruction arsenal. Additionally, librarians who have already decided that the embedded life is for them will benefit from Reale's fresh survey of embedded librarianship, keen self-analysis, and imaginative lists of strategies. This volume will make a handy addition to any instruction librarian's bookshelf. —*Kelli Johnson, Marshall University*