

REVIEWS / CRITIQUES

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Medicare myths: 50 myths we've endured about the Canadian health care system. Dennis J. Furlong. **Saint John, N.B.: Dreamcatcher Publishing, 2004. 156 pages.** **ISBN 1-894372-39-5.**

Dennis J. Furlong has been a family doctor in rural New Brunswick for 30 years. He has also been a Member of the Legislative Assembly, Minister of Education, and Minister of Health for the province of New Brunswick. Furlong's book, *Medicare myths: 50 myths we've endured about the Canadian health care system*, is a timely one, encouraging dialogue on our health care system after the rampant discussions about the 2002 *Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada* (the Romanow Report) have seemingly stopped. However, it should be noted up front that this book is essentially an opinion piece catering to a general audience, its main impact purely anecdotal.

The book is laid out quite simply — no bells or whistles such as an index, bibliography, or even a table of contents. It does, however, contain a forward by Gary Mar, Minister of Health and Wellness for Alberta, as well as a preface and introduction, followed by 10 individually themed chapters. This is a quick read, with large print and an overreliance on emphatic fonts. Every page is peppered with statements in boldface type, lest one miss the essential points the author is trying to make. This is one of the main drawbacks and annoyances of the book.

Furlong does not actually tackle each of the 50 myths that the title implies. Rather, the myths are listed in the last chapter of the book, almost as an afterthought. Instead, the book is primarily focussed on what is wrong with the Canadian health care system as a whole, and what the author thinks needs to be done to save it. Furlong's overall opinion of the current state of the Canadian health care system is "Don't trade it in — fix it." He asserts that the Canadian health care system is one of the best in the world, albeit one in dire need of repair — repair that cannot come by simply throwing more money at the system as it is currently operating.

Furlong prefers a business model for health care, and his main fix for the system is "prorated patient participation". In his view, if patients are made accountable through an income-based, prorated system in which visits to the family doctor

would require payment, people would think twice before making appointments. This prorated participation model stems from Furlong's belief that Canadians currently "overutilize" the system, running to their family doctor at the first sign of a runny nose. This transforms the main problem with the Canadian health care system to one of demand, not of supply, as was laid out in the Romanow Report. In sum, Furlong believes that by making patients more fiscally responsible for their health care, such overutilization would cease, leaving more money for the currently underfunded areas in higher-level medical care, such as surgeries, cancer therapies, etc.

While the book does address other issues, such as the perceived shortage of doctors and nurses in Canada (a notion Furlong denies), drugs, long-term care, etc., it continually harkens back to the main theme of prorated patient participation. This is the author's panacea for health care in Canada, and nothing less will do.

The most significant feature of this book is its contribution to the ongoing dialogue about the Canadian health care system as a whole. Based on Furlong's experiences both as a doctor and as a politician, the book offers a unique perspective. However, although this book is overall a useful addition to writings and discussions regarding Canadian health care, it is essentially a monologue, and nothing more. The book is recommended reading for those who want another spin on the fiscal aspects of problems within the Canadian health care system, but its practical use is limited at best.

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Web Search Garage. Tara Calishain. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall Professional Technical Reference, 2005. 236 pages (soft cover). ISBN 0-13-147148-1.

Web Search Garage is intended for Web searchers who want to refine their searching methods to get better results in better time. Although this book focuses on topics that may be considered outside of a health sciences library's domain, the principles discussed can easily be applied to a variety of topics. The book is organized into eight main parts:

- (1) Introduction to Web searching — Different types of search engines and Internet browsers are discussed. The reader is introduced to searching syntaxes and Boolean modifiers. Other tools, such as plugins, bookmarklets, and other "online gadgets", are also included in this section.
- (2) Principles of Web searching — Strategies that make searching more fruitful are described for different types of searching. A chapter on evaluating Web sites is also included.
- (3) Searching the Web — Searching for news, jobs, and local information is discussed.
- (4) Searching for multimedia — Searching for images and audio files is examined.
- (5) Searching for people — Searching for contact information for individuals, conducting genealogical research, and using online resources, such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, and almanacs, are addressed.
- (6) Consumer searching — Finding help on consumer issues, searching for consumer health information, and "kid-safe searching" are discussed.
- (7) Technical support — Finding help with computer problems (and even finding computer game cheat codes) through the online community is addressed.
- (8) Searching the world — Searching for information about other countries is examined.

Each part contains clear, succinct explanations of the topics presented, and examples illustrating searching strategies and techniques are scattered throughout the text for the reader to follow along with and test on their own. The URLs for useful Web resources are provided throughout the book, and the benefits and drawbacks of each resource are discussed. The examples and Web resources are very "American focused", but the odd Canadian Web site is included.

Web Search Garage covers an enormous amount of ground. The topics included are not discussed in great detail, but the information included is a good starting point for the reader to begin exploring and experimenting on their own. This is the type of book that one would likely need to refer to over and over again, but it is very well organized, and the index makes finding specific topics easy. The author also makes good use of subheadings and colour coding to make things easier for the reader to follow. The tone of the book is quite informal, which will appeal to some readers, but not to others.

Tara Calishain, the author of *Web Search Garage*, is an Internet enthusiast who edits the e-newsletter *ResearchBuzz*. She has previously coauthored a number of publications including *Google Hacks*, *Official Netscape Guide to Internet Research*, and *The Lawyer's Guide to Internet Research*.

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The Librarian's Guide to Writing for Publication. **Rachel Singer Gordon. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2004.** **190 pages. ISBN 0-8108-4895-3. US\$34.95.**

Rachel Singer Gordon is singularly qualified to write the *Librarian's Guide to Writing for Publication*. She has authored or coauthored books for information professionals and published in many library-related journals. Gordon publishes *Info Career Trends*.¹

In *The Librarian's Guide to Writing for Publication*, Gordon provides excellent advice on getting published. One senses her enthusiasm for the profession of librarianship and her genuine interest in getting colleagues to write and contribute to the body of literature on which they all can rely. Gordon calls on her colleagues to contribute and share their expertise with others. This book contributes much to librarianship literature, because it speaks directly to information professionals. Gordon's sound advice covers every detail to consider when writing either for a journal or a book. This book contains the following chapters:

- (1) Getting started in library publication — Topics covered include getting started, handling rejection, finding ideas, association assistance, and professional advantages. The author stresses the importance of not letting rejection stand in the way of moving forward and continuing to write and get published.
- (2) Submitting your work — Discusses choosing an outlet, familiarizing yourself with journals, familiarizing yourself with publishing houses, and finding and following guidelines. Also provided is a series of questions to ask yourself before choosing an article publication outlet. These questions are presented in a table format, one of the many useful tables throughout the book, highlighting important points.
- (3) Queries and proposals — Examines query letters, book proposals, and following up. Typical of the useful tips provided in her book, Gordon not only outlines what is required in a query letter, but also provides a sample letter to illustrate her points.
- (4) Increasing your odds — Topics include increasing your odds of acceptance, working with your editor, and defining your audience. The table of tips and tricks for publishing success advises, "Follow guidelines. Publishers provide these for a reason; ignore them at your peril" and "Deliver what you promise." Writers are reminded to never turn in the first draft of anything you write for publication. Instead, remember to edit, rewrite, and edit again.
- (5) Writing and editing your work — Discusses time management; organization and research; "details, details, details"; editing your work; cultivating clarity; and getting help. A useful checklist of guidelines for formatting your work is also provided. The bottom line is to make manuscripts look standard and straightforward.
- (6) Networking and collaboration — Examines collaborating, conferences and workshops, surveys and interviews, and advice and feedback. Gordon encourages collaboration with a previously published colleague and provides a checklist of issues that "you must agree on before proceeding with the project". The issues include whose name will come first on the finished work, how will you split the proceeds, and will copyright be registered jointly.
- (7) The academic environment — Topics include peer review; research articles; and research funding, support, and awards. Typical of the very practical and useful tips offered, the author writes, "If you do intend to write for the academic environment, be sure to keep up with the scholarly literature in your field. Read the major journals and watch for new titles that address your interests."
- (8) Related opportunities — Examines speaking and presenting, related library writing opportunities, and opportunities outside the library literature. In a profession where collection development is an important component, book and electronic resource reviews are encouraged.
- (9) Writing a book — Discusses developing a topic, choosing a publisher, the acceptance process, the writing and editing process, and the publishing process. A list of selected publishers in the library field, including postal and e-mail addresses, is provided. Steps to expect after submitting a manuscript to a publisher are discussed, and readers are advised, "If your proposal is rejected, dust yourself off and move on."
- (10) Marketing and promotion: yourself and your work — Topics covered include working with your publisher and marketing through professional activities. Also provided is the marketing questionnaire that publishers will typically request from you to promote your book.
- (11) The electronic environment — Topics include communicating professionally online; publishing in e-journals and newsletters; self-publication online; research, reading, and peer review; and electronic ethics. Gordon describes the advantages of electronic publishing, including self-publication online.
- (12) The business of publishing — Discusses the book contract, taxes and accounting, and copyrights and permissions. Gordon does not take for granted that readers have previous knowledge about the process of writing or getting published. For example, she reminds writers

¹For more information on Rachel Singer Gordon, please see <http://www.lisjobs.com/resume.htm>.

to properly cite their sources and declare as income any payment received for articles written. A sample permission letter, for copyright reproduction, is included.

In Appendix A – Writing for publication survey, the survey questions that were used as a source for quotes and information throughout the book is provided. In Appendix B – Publisher interview, readers are treated to interviews with Leonard Kniffel, editor and publisher, *American Libraries*; Heather McCormack, assistant managing editor, *Library Journal Book Review*; John B. Bryans, editor-in-chief, *Information Today Books*; Gloriana St. Clair, managing editor, *portal: Libraries and the Academy*; Dan Marmion, editor, *Information Technology and Libraries*; and William Hann, founder and managing editor of *Free Pint*.

The Librarian's Guide to Writing for Publication includes a bibliography and index. The book is recommended reading for anyone contemplating taking the plunge and writing for publication. Gordon's enthusiasm for writing is contagious. Here's hoping more information professionals catch the publication bug!

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