Based on responses to a 2008 ARLIS survey, this illustrated publication provides a brief but informative overview of display and exhibition design and development. This small, spiral bound, illustrated handbook focuses on displays and exhibitions specific to the art library.

Libraries often use displays to share resources and collections with patrons. While there are publications that speak, generally, to displays in libraries, the focus here is on the art library as a resource. Art libraries have the benefit of diverse and often visually interesting collections. Additionally, library staff bring unique interests and expertise to the development of these projects.

Displays and exhibitions are distinctly different enterprises, but have similar key elements necessary for project success. By focusing on topics such as establishing goals, project planning, design, promotion, and evaluation, the editors provide a framework for implementing similar projects in a variety of art library environments.

The handbook functions as an idea book rather than a precise recipe for implementation, and it is written in a clear and accessible style. After reading, one has a very basic exhibition design vocabulary and relevant examples to inspire future project development.

Each short chapter ends with a succinct summary of the information covered and is followed by a relevant case study. A variety of European institutions are represented in the case studies including the National Art Library, Chelsea College of Art and Design, and the Van Gogh Museum. Although the focus of these case studies is European, the narratives and conclusions are applicable to any type of art library. All but one of the five case studies are written by librarians who work at the institutions presented, and each case study offers a unique perspective with diverse approaches to displays and exhibits.

Additional resources in the handbook include an exhibition proposal example, a glossary of terms, and a bibliography. The equipment supply list is specific to Europe but is useful in its description of the types of supplies one might need for displays and exhibitions.

The last page of the publication ends with the quote: “All art librarians should organize an exhibition at least once in their careers.” As many art librarians and library staff are faced with the prospect of not only creating displays and exhibitions but also making them relevant, interesting, and supportive of institutional mission, this handbook is a welcome introductory guide.

Displays and exhibitions in art libraries is written for art librarians and library staff and would be useful as a professional development tool.

Lareese Hall, Fine Arts Liaison Librarian, Denison University Library, Denison University, hallL@denison.edu.