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Sobel's "Nature Preschools and Forest Kindergartens: The Handbook for Outdoor Learning" (Book Review)

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Well-written and concise, this book helps instructional librarians see the importance of its theoretical assertions, and inspires them to look at their guides with new eyes. This book might best be read as a team, applied in reverse order from collaboration on the whole site, to the design of individual guides, as an opportunity for both professional development and online library improvement.

**Nature Preschools and Forest Kindergartens: The Handbook for
Outdoor Learning,**

by David Sobel. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press, 2016. 259 pp. \$39.95.
ISBN 9781605544298

*Reviewed by Lori Thornton, Technical Services Librarian,
Carson-Newman University, Jefferson City, TN*

David Sobel and his team of contributors support providing more time on young children to interact with the natural environment through a combination of play and learning. The movement promoted manifests itself in nature preschools and forest kindergartens. Nature preschools began in the United States and are often connected with zoos or nature centers. The forest kindergarten movement began in Scandinavia and is popular throughout Europe. Sobel claims that Americans are too afraid to allow children to interact with their environment which leads to many issues including the failure to build immunity to allergens. He shows how young children are spending less and less time in the kind of play that was once common. Proponents of this movement argue that it is more important to study nature than books.

One of the chapters details six basic differences in the attitudes of Europeans versus Americans—the value of play versus academics, the role of the teacher, safety, the concept of fun, the concept of nature, and the concept of childhood. While the authors did not state that Americans were more likely to seek litigation if a child was injured, it was implied. Europeans are more likely to see it as a part of growing up. In a later chapter, one of the guest authors describes this as a difference in a risk (in which it is possible although not very likely something unfortunate might happen) versus a hazard (in which it is likely to produce a harmful consequence).

The authors show examples of the curriculum in such a school emphasizing the natural world, but unfortunately the overall curriculum is not well-defined. They do treat language skills in a separate chapter focusing to an extent on rhymes and songs that help children develop in this area. The kindergarten age receives the most treatment in the chapter.

In one chapter by contributor Ken Finch, a spiritual benefit is mentioned. The author, however, qualifies this stating he is referring to emergent worldview instead of religious beliefs. A Christian would likely see a benefit in exposing the child to all the wonders of God's creation.

The book provides information on budgeting and other financial considerations such as fundraising and tuition, zoning considerations, marketing and publicity, and facilities. Essentials such as the availability of restrooms and cell phone reception are discussed as well as desirable things. The book contains best practices in several areas as no standards currently exist for these programs. Included are assessment rubrics to aid in program evaluation. The final chapter shows a typical autumn day in one such school.

A bibliography is included for those wishing to pursue the subject further, and an index makes it easier to locate specific content. While the premise that children are not playing enough is likely true, other methods of incorporating play, even outdoor play, exist. I question allowing children to play outdoors in sub-zero temperatures. Sobel is a well-regarded in this movement and serves as the director of Teacher Certification Programs for Antioch New England Graduate School. The book is an optional purchase for most libraries.

**Navigating the Future with Scenario Planning:
A Guidebook for Librarians,**

by Joan Giesecke, John Cawthorne, and Deb Pearson. Chicago: Association of College & Research Libraries, 2015. 118pp. \$36.00. ISBN 9780838987513

Reviewed by Noelle C. Keller, Technical Services Librarian, Shipman Library, Adrian College, Adrian, MI.

This guidebook to using scenario planning theory to address possible future organizational change is an update of editor Joan Giesecke's 1998 American Library Association book, *Scenario Planning for Libraries*. The three authors, Giesecke, Cawthorne, and Pearson, bring their professional academic library experience in planning, accreditation and assessment to bear in organizing this brief book.

Part one, chapters 1-4, covers the process and models of scenario planning theory. It lays out step-by-step instructions for writing and conducting scenario planning cases or examples. Part two, chapters 5-9, presents essays on the use of scenario planning within higher education, as well as, case studies.