

University Libraries Section in San Francisco

Highlights from the ALA Annual Conference

Editor's note: *The ULS report from the ALA Annual Conference in June was inadvertently omitted from the September issue. We are pleased to bring it to you here in its entirety.*

The program "Outside/In: Seeing Ourselves As Others See Us," sponsored by ACRL's University Libraries Section (ULS) and Blackwell's Book Services, was attended by more than 200 people. The program focused on ways in which professionals outside librarianship view information services today, and how understanding that perspective can help academic libraries plan for success.

The first panelist, Carol Hughes (Questia Media), started the discussion by sharing her experiences at Questia Media. Questia Media did a lot of market research, investigating both librarians' views and student needs, in order to create a product that will have lasting value. By asking similar questions and understanding the role of the product/service offered by the library in a larger marketplace, academic librarians can help their institutions achieve greater success.

Questia Media determined that in order to meet the informational needs of their intended market, their collection needed to be searchable for free, have text markup tools easily accessible, allow unlimited simultaneous access 24 hours a day/7 days a week, offer automated citation and bibliography generation, and the service needed to be personalized. The lesson that can be learned for libraries from this research is that "one size does not fit all." Students are more nontraditional than ever, and academic libraries need to investigate the role of personal preferences and characteristics, not just rely on institutional characteristics for success.

The second panelist, Stephanie Bangert (Western Association of Schools and Colleges), also stressed the need for libraries to look outside themselves to see how they are perceived and use that perspective to improve and enhance their function within their larger institutions. Principles

of accreditation can provide a basis for the types of questions libraries and librarians need to be able to address and articulate, particularly their role within the institution of turning students into learners.

Bangert discussed several trends in accreditation that help demonstrate the changing academic environment. First, there is a shift from the idea of "student" to that of "lifelong learner." Second, institutions (and libraries within larger institutions) need to show continuous improvement, not just compliance with articulated goals.

Bangert described the heart of accreditation as the ability to create a system that contributes to sustainability and program quality. The key researchable question for libraries is "How does the library in its management of academic information contribute to student learning, education effectiveness, and continuous improvement for the university?"

The final panelist, John Seely Brown (Xerox), discussed the changing nature of academic information through the perspective of a social context of information. There has been an epistemological shift in the way we perceive information. The old Cartesian view, "I think therefore I am," stressed the separation of mind and body, and identified knowledge as a substance that could be transferred. The new shift to "We participate, therefore we are," has led to an understanding that information is socially constructed.

One thing to be learned from this is that students offered a chance for social understanding will achieve more than students following the inactive knowledge absorption pattern will. Digital delivery of information can have a downside, as "efficiency is not the same as effectiveness." Documents are no longer defined solely as carriers of information, but rather as support for social interaction and community formation and maintenance. Libraries can therefore bring multiple

(continued on page 939)

and the unfamiliar, Fuller's book chronicles the discovery and loss of each. \$49.95. Cornell University. ISBN 0-9014-3954-X.

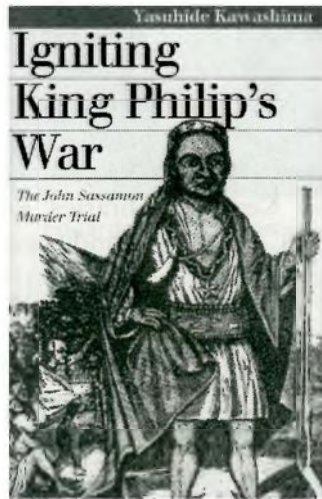
For Love of Learning (204 pages, May 2001) is a catalog of the special collections and primary sources available at the University of Louisville Libraries and Archives, which is particularly rich in the history of the Irish Literary Renaissance, the history of books and printing, and popular culture. Though much of the catalog is available on the library's Web site at special.library.louisville.edu, the print version is more browsable and serendipitous. To request a copy, contact Special Collections and Archives, Ekstrom Library, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40292.

Gettysburg: The First Day, by Harry W. Pfanz (472 pages, July 2001), lives up to the quality of the author's earlier works on Gettysburg's second day and the battles around Cemetery and Culp's hills. Pfanz, retired National Park Service chief historian and Gettysburg National Military Park historian, has written the definitive work on the battle of July 1, 1863, with much more detail than Warren Hassler's 1970 *Crisis at the Crossroads*. The first day, often neglected by historians in favor of the later engagements of Round Top and Pickett's Charge, was just as crucial, with General Buford's cavalry delaying Confederate forces sufficiently to allow arriving infantry to secure the high ground that became decisive later on; and Confederate General Ewell's failure to press an attack by the end of the day, which resulted in one of the many controversial "what if's" of the battle. A definitive analysis that is essential for Civil War collections. \$34.95. University of North Carolina. ISBN 0-8078-2624-3.

Handbook of Norse Mythology, by John Lindow (365 pages, June 2001), summarizes the deities, themes, and concepts in the Scandinavian eddic and skaldic poetry and the writings of Snorri Sturluson that constitute the bulk of written Norse myth. Descriptions of both major and minor gods and heroes are concise and straightforward, with original

sources credited throughout. Books and articles suggested for further reading are often in German, Norwegian, or Icelandic as well as in English. A reliable and handy reference. \$55.00. ABC-CLIO. ISBN 1-57607-217-7.

Igniting King Philip's War, by Yasuhide Kawashima (201 pages, June 2001), examines the background and criminal proceedings of one of the first landmark cases in North American law, the trial for the murder of Wampanoag Indian John Sassamon in the Plymouth colony of New England in 1675. Sassamon may have been killed by three of his own people for threatening to reveal to the colonists that the Wampanoag were getting ready to attack; that certainly was the decision of the court, which sentenced the three to death.



However, the trial was the flashpoint for conflict with the Wampanoags that came to be known as King Philip's War. Not only had the Plymouth colonists usurped their jurisdiction in the case, but it was a rush to judgment beset with procedural violations and neglected forensic evidence. Ultimately, it also set a precedent for treating local Native Americans not as coexisting equals, but as marginalized vassals who after the war were forced to live in designated vil-

lages under the strict rule of colonial law with no opportunity to participate as citizens. \$29.95. University Press of Kansas. ISBN 0-7006-1092-8.

("University Libraries Section . . ." continued from page 914)

communities together. "While the book supports one particular interpretive community, the library can serve to bring different disciplines together." This can be done through simple peripheral clues such as the display of new book jackets and a new book shelf.

Discussion following the panelists presentations revolved around ways in which libraries and librarians can open these types of discussions in their institutions and help create a learning environment that takes advantage of changing technologies without losing a sense of place.—*Mary Laskowski, University of Illinois, mkschnei@uiuc.edu* ■