

than impressive. Certainly, one of the keys to the profession's gaining greater influence is education, and books such as *Digital Copyright* will be instrumental in that education as they attempt to translate the confusing language of copyright law into understandable terms.—*Timothy Hensley, Randolph-Macon College.*

**Matthews, Jack.** *Reading Matter: A Rabid Bibliophile's Adventures among Old and Rare Books.* New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Pr., 2000. 208p. \$29.95, alk. paper (ISBN 1584560274). LC 00-031361. If you missed reading a selection of Jack Matthews's essays in prior appearances in the *Washington Times*, *Antioch Review*, or *Soundings*, you will be glad to have another opportunity in *Reading Matter*. This delightful collection of twelve essays is both educational and entertaining, and includes topics as disparate as the comma and booksellers' catalogs. The essays are unified by the theme of book collecting, described by Matthews as bibliophilia. Elements of this underlying theme creep

into each essay in the form of an anecdote. Matthews, distinguished professor of English language and literature at Ohio University, uses the anecdote as preamble, a device through which he launches into the central theme of the essays themselves. The first essay, "Anecdotal Evidence," contrasts trivia with triviality and anecdotes, placing anecdotes in context in literature and history and thus preparing the reader for what is to come—especially in an artistic (if not thematic) sense.

Several essays address the book as object. In "The Binding of Books and the Matter of Spirit," Matthews offers a chatty, yet theoretical, discussion of bindings. Far from taking a traditional approach, the author bounces between topics, ranging from book coverings to their contents, in a manner that might be described as a "stream of consciousness." He speaks of establishing a "sensible balance between inner and outer validities." Matthews paints an interesting history of dust jackets in "Dust Jackets and the Art of Memory." Through examples, he dem-

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onstrates the potential value of a dust jacket as a tool for better understanding the time in which it was produced. Matthews dissects several specimens by and about well-known authors, commenting on what was and was not said.

Other chapters focus on why people write books and what they write in them. "Words from the Smokehouse: The Vituperations of Theophilus Noel" examines the motivation behind authorship, which Matthews speculates stems from egotism, at least in a broad sense. He explores authorship and publishing, and substantiates his earlier premise by citing vanity presses. This discussion expands into vocabularies and perceived bigotries resulting from the use of specific words, or connotations. "Inscribed Copies, Or 'What the Hell Can I Say'" begins with an anecdote about the passions of collecting and describes an individual who collected annotations travelers had inscribed in Gideon's Bibles throughout the country. This passage provides commentary on another facet of the passion for collecting as well as an opening for Matthews's discussion of the value that annotations can add to many texts. He notes the perfunctory nature of many inscriptions and comments that they have little value if they cannot be placed in the context of history. He also highlights exceptions, many of which provide insight into the text itself. The chapter title is excerpted from an inscription penned by Charles Bukowski, and Matthews cites other examples in which the authors of texts have drawn directly upon their content for inspiration.

Bibliomania is the topic of two pieces. "Vesalius and the Sleepy Oncologist" describes Matthews's chance encounter with a physician with whom he has a conversation about book collecting, in which the doctor reveals his hidden passion for a medical rarity. Through his inclusion of this venture into the history of medicine, Matthews demonstrates the breadth and depth of his wide-ranging interests. He supplies readers with evidence that he is indeed a bibliophile and has no qualms

about educating the uninitiated in the pleasures of book collecting. The penultimate essay, "Bookish Lunacies," concerns itself with the challenges and diversions associated with the thrill of the hunt. As he delves into the realm of bibliomania, Matthews recounts tales of book hunters who have come in contact with a "slice of human life." Matthews tends to wander off the theme of bookishness in this essay, embarking on a study of human nature and eccentrics as viewed from his unique perspective.

"The Philosophy of the Comma" is a discourse on punctuation. This essay, like most, is filled with visual imagery. Matthews describes "commas [that] stood out like metal studs on a dog collar," as he provides an analysis of the use of the comma in several works spanning centuries and genres. Other essays include: "A Cabinet of Facts and Fancies"; "Heraclitus on Hog Island"; and "A Woman Great with Child in Pago," which begins with a pleasant travelogue of a journey the author took to Norway in which, as anticipated, he describes an episode of bibliophilia.

The final essay in this compilation, "Last Words," is a brief study of the dying words of famous people, discussed here because they frequently appear in anthologies. Matthews acknowledges that these final utterances, compilations of which were common during the nineteenth century, are often given more weight than daily conversation. This is a fitting final chapter to any book. Matthews cites examples from literary and theatrical worlds, among others, and notes that more often than not, last words are quoted by writers. There is, perhaps, a hint of suspicion present in this exploration, as he notes that this period in one's life is an opportunity for high drama.

This volume does not contain an index, and there are minor editing errors in the text. For example, two of the chapter titles listed in the table of contents do not correspond with the titles on the essay title pages. Although this series of essays may not be a useful reference tool, the

texts themselves are well written, intellectually stimulating, challenging, and entertaining. Moreover, the book is nicely illustrated with a series of eight full-color plates and is supplemented with title page transcriptions. The essays of Matthews, a prolific author, combine to create a thought-provoking text that will appeal to librarians, book collectors, and students of book history alike.—*Lois Fischer Black, North Carolina State University.*

**West, Cynthia K.** *Techno-Human Mesh: The Growing Power of Information Technologies*. Westport, Conn.: Quorum, 2001. 240p. \$62.50, alk. paper (ISBN 1567204090). LC 00-037295.

Cynthia West's *Techno-Human Mesh* is a remarkable contribution to the research on the relations between the human body and digital devices. West is a political theorist who works as an independent consultant in the information technology industry. She spent more than ten years in Silicon Valley as a "digerati" researching how information technology (IT) affects, changes, and shapes society and culture globally. By examining the intersection of IT, power, people, and bodies, West demonstrates how new modes of surveillance and control in society and over human bodies are created by IT as it becomes more efficient, productive, and profitable.

Because the emerging technologies integrate bodies and machines through various interfaces, West explores the ways in which human-machine interface technologies, biometric technologies, and surveillance technologies change the way physical bodies are experienced. She analyzes the concepts of "body" and "power" using feminist and postmodern theories, including Donna Haraway's "cyborgs," Katherine Hayles's "embodiment," and Michel Foucault's "power networks." The concept of power networks, Foucault explains, is that "power is not a simple binary relationship of one class over another, but one of complex nonlinear relationships," which "is diffused through-

out society, like a network, in a variety of locations, institutions, and practices."

Digerati are defined as those "people who are engaged in designing, developing, marketing, and selling IT products and services" or those with special IT knowledge. West analyzes various factors of digerati identity, such as age, gender, ethnicity, and economic status. The digerati is divided into three classes: first are the A-list digerati consisting of the executive management of IT companies, venture capitalists, and majority stockholders who fund the companies; second are the academic researchers and developers, engineers, and programmers who have special IT knowledge to design, produce, and develop IT; and third are the vice presidents, directors, and senior sales and marketing personnel who require enough IT knowledge to market and sell products. Digerati class is based on a variety of ethnic, racial, economic, and geographic factors. The majority of the digerati are from developed countries, although more and more are hired from developing countries because they will work for lower wages. These classes of digerati have different degrees of power. The people of the A-list have the greatest power through their ownership of companies.

Tracing the evolution of computers, West focuses on human-machine interface technologies. In her view, the progress of computer technology, size (smaller) and running speed (faster) are the major development trends. The smaller digital devices can be worn on human bodies easily and improve workers' flexibility and productivity. They also allow companies to hire less-experienced and minimally trained personnel as surrogate bodies through wireless communication. Through their efforts to merge machines and human bodies, the digerati are now in a good position to create more efficient tools in the name of productivity and profitability.

West believes that for the public good, the public must be engaged in IT development and recommends six levels of ac-