Book Reviews

Collecting and Safeguarding the Oral Traditions: An International Conference. Eds. John McIlwaine and Jean Whiffrin. Munich: K.G. Saur (IFLA Publications 95), 2001. 158p. $53 (ISBN 3598218257).

When oral data began to be widely and seriously collected about forty years ago, there was no satisfactory infrastructure in place to store and disseminate them. Libraries, still resolutely book oriented, were not inclined to welcome the new format. Tapes were difficult to conserve and preserve, and providing efficient access proved a costly nightmare. An unanticipated, but decidedly grievous, outcome was that scholars who used materials collected orally kept them to themselves, in effect, daring their readers to criticize their conclusions without the evidence to do so. (See Henige, "'In the Possession of the Author': The Problem of Source Monopoly in Oral Historiography," *International Journal of Oral History* 1 [1980]: 181–94.). Despite the eventual establishment of depositories such as the Archives of Traditional Music at Indiana University, a scholarly monopoly developed, was found congenial, and largely continues today.

In the meantime, research libraries, the natural home for such materials, evolved from a stack space to cyberspace environment, which was no more friendly to oral data. When libraries did find room for oral materials, it was generally in the form of transcripts rather than tapes; that is, the primary source was enthusiastically eschewed in favor of its *simulacrum.* Still, materials were added, perhaps even at an increasing pace. However, this was in the face of trends (e.g., subaltern studies) in several disciplines that fostered the gathering of oral information at an ever faster rate. There is no way to know, but it would not be unreasonable to guess that at least 90 percent of the materials gathered since the 1960s either remains in their collectors' possession and/or has deteriorated to an unusable state. As a result, those interested in the conclusions based on them, for instance, in African history or U.S. social history, have the choice of believing or disbelieving, but not the chance to find out which is the better option.

The work under review illustrates that, although the news is bad, it is by no means all bad. Included are seventeen relatively short chapters, of which three address general concerns or are global in focus, whereas three deal with Africa, another four with southeast Asia, two with Latin America and the Caribbean, three with Oceania, and one each with Europe and North America. This distribution is fairly symptomatic of the state of play, in which developing nations, once mercilessly interrogated by the West, are now interrogating themselves.

Several of the essays are accounts of case studies, in which an organization of one kind or another mobilizes to collect specific kinds of data from selected groups, usually those not well represented in the normal course of events. By and large, the enthusiasm of the authors of these accounts is boundless, and they nearly all reiterate in one guise or another the Platonic refrain that literacy homogenizes, inhibits, and ossifies the production, growth, and transmission of knowledge. This is fair enough as long as the primary purpose is to supplement rather than replace other forms of information. Perhaps it is best to consider that literacy and orality can coexist in a synergistic way—in fact, have done so in countless societies for at least five thousand years.

For many, the most useful paper is the one on the technical aspects of collecting and preserving oral data. Although often proffering counsels of perfection, the pro-

cedures outlined might eventually come to be a model for this process. Yet, it may be quixotic to expect the initiatives described here—many of them sustained by enthusiastic, but not always trained volunteers—ever to possess the wherewithal to acquire and maintain both the equipment and the labor-intensive procedures that are recommended. Still, in a field where there are few standards, those proposed here can serve as a handy target.

There are surprisingly few mentions of that bête noire—resource-sharing. Although presumably an implicit goal, very little is said about the mechanics, or even about the overall desirability of this in principle. With digitization all but the norm, at least in better-favored reaches of the library world, such sharing of transcripts can only be a formality. As for sharing the audio and video tapes (the real primary source, remember), no suggestions are advanced. All this requires that knowledge about these collections be made available in the now-usual expedient of the Web site and listserv, about which, again, little is bruited.

Just the same, these essays are important in reinforcing the apparently not-so-obvious notion that there is a rewarding and symbiotic relationship between libraries and oral materials waiting to happen. One has the sense that the collectors of oral materials would like nothing better than to work closely with librarians in effecting the dissemination of their materials. Are libraries ready to pick up the gauntlet? Surely, even those unduly enamored of the electronic should be able to recognize the possibilities for symbiosis. At any rate, they should bear in mind the need to anticipate the ravages of passing time. It might prove to be that these tapes have a useful life no longer than the electronic version of the Domesday Book, but without either an original or numerous editions as backup.

Finally, I have to report that this work, whose message is all about access, has *no* index. Did the editors not appreciate the sad irony of this? Is compiling an index really *that* onerous?—*David Henige, University of Wisconsin-Madison.*

Crosbie, Michael J., and Damon D. Hickey. *When Change Is Set in Stone: An Analysis of Seven Academic Libraries Designed by Perry Dean Rogers & Partners.* Chicago: ACRL, 2001. 104p., alk. paper, $60 (less 10% for ACRL members) (ISBN 0838981364). LC 2001-16069.

ACRL has sponsored publication of a striking book on the libraries designed, in the late 1990s, by the architectural firm of Perry Dean Rogers & Partners of Boston. This firm has been "designing campus libraries for the last thirty years," and one might therefore assume they should know something about creating buildings that function well as academic libraries. This book might serve as a source of ideas and inspiration for any academic librarians involved with building projects.

Gathering seven contemporary projects into one richly illustrated work is perhaps this book's greatest virtue. It gives the reader a rare opportunity to view pictures, study plans, and read about a wide variety of academic library types—from the huge complexes at Colorado State University and University of Maryland-Baltimore to the almost-petite Science Library at the College of Wooster—all in one volume. Librarian Hickey's introductory overview of the then-current factors affecting library design is particularly insightful and still useful. It is notable how many similar features and details—despite the wide range of needs, size and fundings—crop up in all the seven projects. This may have more to say about how architects have certain "shticks" that they feel compelled to impose on all their designs than about the common needs of all academic libraries.

Crosbie, an architectural journalist, practicing architect, and instructor at Roger Williams University, brings a wide range of experience in writing about buildings to this work. Hickey, his coauthor, is director of libraries at the College of Wooster and has been involved with several library building projects, two of which are featured in this book. They have taken on a difficult task in their attempt to provide an impartial description and critique of each of the projects. Generally, they suc-