

Book Reviews

Stieg, Margaret F. *Change and Challenge in Library and Information Science Education*. Chicago: ALA, 1992. 206p. alk. paper, \$37 (ISBN 0-8389-0576-5).

Margaret Stieg's book constitutes an open invitation to research universities to discontinue programs of library and information science (or studies) (LIS) education. Current trends in higher education, Stieg says, conflict with professional traditions and interests. In the old days—the 1950s, say—education for librarianship meant simply a one-year master's degree program, there was no such thing as information science, doctoral programs were nonexistent or marginal, and the teachers had many years of practical library experience and were not expected to do much, if any, research. Universities have changed since then in the direction of Clark Kerr's multiversity, with very heavy emphasis on research and doctoral education, and heavy (and increasing) reliance on extramural funding. To justify LIS programs in research universities now, one must be able to argue that there is intellectually interesting and practically important research to be done, and that there is support for a strong doctoral program.

That is exactly what Stieg does not do. She does not discuss doctoral level education at all, but concentrates exclusively on master's degree programs, with chapters on faculty, curriculum, students, and administration that proceed largely as if the schools she is talking about offered only master's degree programs. (Other chapters include a historical overview, discussions of the aims of professional education, the professional context, the university setting, and accreditation.) But in a research university, the case for a master's degree program

has to show how it is and must be embedded in a larger context essentially involving doctoral education and research. Stieg does not do that, and so cannot seriously address the question of the place of LIS programs or schools in research universities; nor can she answer the questions she poses of what a good LIS school is and what a school's responsibilities are.

Stieg thinks it unfortunate that research is so much emphasized in LIS schools, and concludes that the professions would be better served if educational programs concentrated on teaching and new institutions were designed to produce the research that is needed. She has nothing at all to say about what kinds of research are actually done and what might be done. Her views on research are essentially discredited by her strikingly confused view of information science. She thinks the relationship between librarianship and information science is "probably the most complex intellectual problem" faced by LIS education, with big political and economic consequences—which she does not address, except to suggest that information science and scientists are likely to split off from library education. (She clearly reads LIS as "librarianship and information-science," not as "library-and-information science," which she thinks does not and will not exist.) She argues that information science education differs from library education in that there is no identifiable profession for which IS education prepares one; it is a nonprofession and very likely a non-science too. But she also says that both librarianship and information science are both professions and disciplines. On the one hand, she blithely asserts that "what was information science a generation

ago is now mainstream librarianship." On the other, she doubts that there is any such thing as information science: what, if anything, it is remains, she says, a matter of debate. She is not the only one to be confused about information science, but confusion on this subject is not an advantage when trying to describe LIS education.

Nothing she says suggests any reason for the multiversity to be interested in LIS programs. The picture she draws (apparently based on published documents, accreditation records, and visits to eight schools) is a depressing one, of small isolated units with undistinguished faculty members. The schools are unselective, admitting nearly all who apply. (She mentions Berkeley and UCLA as exceptions to this rule.) On their campuses, she thinks, they are not respected: they are seen as providing training rather than education, and are viewed as intellectually and professionally inadequate. They are expensive, and bring in little outside support for research. They have been attempting to transform themselves into schools for the information professions generally, but librarianship and information science are diverging socially and intellectually, as information scientists assert their intellectual superiority over traditional librarianship. Stieg does not even try to defend the LIS educational programs she describes in such unflattering terms; nor does she make any substantive recommendations for improvement. She thinks the schools fit awkwardly in the multiversity, and expresses no concern about the possibility that LIS education might go elsewhere. (She mentions alternatives such as undergraduate education and intensive workshops but has no recommendations herself.) She does say that it is hard to understand campus disdain for the "knowledge base" of the field, but only suggests vaguely that this may be because that "knowledge base" is essentially humanistic—a weird view of LIS, but she is thinking only of traditional librarianship, not of information science or of the, for her, nonexistent library-and-information science. Her ig-

norance of information science is crippling and dangerous; if others were to take her book as a competent account of the current state of research in LIS, it could be the end of LIS education in research universities.

It has to be said that this is a profoundly reactionary book, showing a strong distaste for the kind of research, development, and professional practice in information work that is gradually growing from deep roots in bibliography and librarianship. It would be deplorable if the fact that the American Library Association published this book were taken to imply corporate endorsement of its reactionary message. Stieg says her book is meant to clarify issues and increase understanding. It does neither. It will make work for deans, having to counteract within the university its regressive and misleading account of the present and possible future of LIS education.—Patrick Wilson, *University of California, Berkeley*.

Harris, Roma M. *Librarianship: The Erosion of a Woman's Profession*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1992. 186p. alk. paper, \$22.50 (ISBN 0-89391-941-1).

The year 1992 has been called "the year of the woman," and, indeed, some significant events justify that label. It was a year of historic firsts, ranging from the election of four women to the United States Senate, the announcement that an African-American woman would be the "poet laureate" at the new President's inauguration, and a clear indication that the new First "Lady" will have a post that matches her intelligence and accomplishments. Reading *Librarianship: The Erosion of a Woman's Profession* against the backdrop of this supposed woman's year, however, brought a heavy dose of reality, reminding one how far librarians have come and how terribly far we, as individuals and as a profession, have yet to go.

Roma Harris has written a book that will, I expect by design, make some people extremely uneasy. She is unambiguous about her purpose and unapologetic about her theoretical orientation.