

becomes relevant within a library context, for the polyvalence of meaning has been a theme in our discipline ever since Martin Schrettinger questioned the existence of any book's unique position on library shelves in his writings of the early nineteenth century, drawing attention to what Nikolaus Wegmann has called the "illusion of the 'mono'graph." Other contemporaries wondering about the validity of library classification also have written in this vein. In a 1999 book, *Into the Looking-Glass Wood*, Canadian reading historian Alberto Manguel described the power of the fickle reader this way: "what we believe a book to be reshapes itself with every reading. Over the years, my experience, my tastes, my prejudices have changed: as the days go by, my memory keeps reshelving, cataloguing, discarding the volumes in my library; my words and my world—except for a few constant landmarks—are never one and the same. Heraclitus's bon mot about time applies equally well to my reading: 'You never dip into the same book twice.'" The book by Flynn and Schweickart provides a host of evidence regarding the role that the overlapping, constantly shifting roles of race, gender, age, social status, and ad hoc intent plays in the construction of any particular reader's interpretive matrix.

Thus, we encounter here highly specific, nongeneralizing essays looking at mixed sets of reader characteristics and predispositions responding to narrow genres of writing. Jane Greer, for example, contributes a study of working-class women readers in mid-twentieth-century America and their particular reception of confessional magazines. Erin A. Smith looks at another highly specific topic, the genre of women's hard-boiled detective fiction, popular in pulp magazines of the 1920s through the 1940s, again as read by working-class readers. Louise Yelin transnationalizes the topic by examining various readings of works by Australian

Peter Carey, Franco-Afro-Caribbean writer Maryse Condé, and Anglo-Caribbean writer Caryl Phillips, each of which itself represents a rereading of a classical nineteenth-century British work.

A librarian reading these essays emerges with a sense of relief that our profession continues to eschew the assignment of subject headings to works of fiction, but also wondering how many innovative research ideas are nipped in the bud by the straitjacketing assignments of subject headings to works of history, criticism, and analysis. Odds are, however, that our user communities are well beyond us in this arena. They use Google and other online tools to execute subtle and highly associative searches with relevance rankings based not on inflexible search-heading vocabulary, but on occurrences and co-occurrences of certain "key" words that *they* choose. Ideally, these searches retrieve books, chapters, Web sites, and articles prioritized by complex ranking algorithms that still somehow replicate the "purposeful randomness" of human thought. —Jeffrey Garrett, *Northwestern University*.

*Women's Issues at IFLA: Equality, Gender and Information on Agenda: Papers from the Programs of the Round Table on Women's Issues at IFLA Annual Conferences, 1993–2002.* Ed. Leena Siitonen. Munchen: K.G. Saur (IFLA Publications 106), 2003. 244p. alk. paper, \$94.55 (ISBN 3598218362). Critically renowned author and editor Leena Siitonen gathered thirty diverse papers pertaining to the historical and contemporary professional status and advancement of women in the field of librarianship. Each contributor to the monograph has been a member, at some time since 1990, of the Round Table on Women's Issues (RTWI), a dedicated section of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA). Siitonen has been the editor and author of

a range of works associated with information retrieval methods, technology communications, online searching strategies and their effects on the user population, and international women's issues.

The intention of this publication is to inform and empower women across the globe on how to increase accessibility to information and technology, as well as to stimulate members of professional library organizations to challenge the traditional bureaucracies of the library and information world. This monograph contains papers addressing women librarians' education, women's library and professional career status, women's literacy, global information needs of women, women's access to information, information and library resources for women, women's vocational training, and women's access to, and use of, communication and information technologies. Siitonen organized the papers according to the themes mentioned above into seven major categories: "Changing Roles of Women Librarians"; "Professional Status as a Goal"; "Library Managers and Gender"; "Information Services for Women: Access and Hindrances"; "Women's Information Needs: A Societal and Feminist Issue"; "Key to the Future: Education and Information Society"; and "Culture and Economy: Global Challenges."

Beginning with the first section, "Changing Roles of Women Librarians," Siitonen gathered six relevant papers by a variety of authors from around the world in order to summarize the central theme of women's role in libraries. The first paper of the monograph gives an overview. "Information Services for Women in Developing Countries," by H. Kay Raseroka, argues that there is a crucial need to place women in a separate category when analyzing our ability to meet their information and communication needs.

Raseroka incorporates multiple levels of sociocultural analysis in her examination of the communication and information needs of women across the globe. In addition, she proposes clear international guidelines for the future establishment of information services for women.

An example of a more specific article is Sandra Parker and Catherine Hare's "National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs): One Route to Improve the Status of Women in Libraries," in which they discuss the global predominance of females in librarianship. Moreover, the authors observe that women are typically employed at lower staff levels, such as library assistants, instead of as higher-level managers. Among the reasons for this phenomenon are family commitments, career breaks, and reduced working hours. Parker and Hare provide useful information pertaining to NVQs, which can be one means of increasing women's skills in the workforce. Specifically, this paper sheds light on the findings of the INSIST project of the University of Northumbria, in which the researchers investigated the advantages, disadvantages, and benefits of the NVOs.

In summary, the papers in this monograph, collected either through IFLA's archive or directly from the authors, tap into only a portion of the larger universe of women and librarianship. (According to Siitonen, not many of the papers originally written in English were translated into the official international languages of IFLA. On the other hand, some of the papers that were translated and presented in English originally existed in other languages.) This compilation is highly recommended for graduate levels and above, specifically in the fields of information technology, library science, women's studies, and international studies. —*Catherine C. Nash, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.*