

Book Reviews



Forging the Future of Special Collections. Arnold Hirshon, Robert H. Jackson, and Melissa A. Hubbard, eds. Chicago: Neal-Schuman, 2016. 202p. Paper, \$85.00 (ISBN 978-08389-1386-4).

In October 2014, more than two hundred archivists, book collectors, donors, and librarians from the United States and Canada convened at Case Western University in Cleveland, Ohio, to discuss the state of Special Collections in North American libraries. The conference, “Acknowledging the Past, Forging the Future,” was hailed as “a milestone event in assessing the past and projecting the future of special collections.” The edited collection *Forging the Future of Special Collections* is a product of the sessions and “expands and enriches the ideas presented at the colloquium by including significant additional material from the contributors” (xv). The featured volume of essays is composed of three sections with 17 total chapters. Each chapter summarizes the revised remarks of event commentators and includes an introduction by Robert H. Jackson. Jackson points to the importance of the collection of essays, noting, “The implication is that the future of the book is in our hands. We will control it. We will shape it. The decisions we make as readers, collectors, and special librarians today will determine what happens to our fields tomorrow. This is a hopeful message, and this book presents a hopeful future as well” (xv).

Part I, titled “Communities,” includes chapters by E. Haven Hawley (“Reflections on the Meaning of Objects”), Jim Kuhn (“Affinities and Alliances: Thoughts on Acquisitions, Collection Development, and Donor Relations”), and Jon A. Lindseth (“Where Does the Collector/Donor Community See Special Collections Today?”). The essays examine the current and future interconnectivity of material objects, the work of special collections librarians, and the roles and contributions of collectors and donors. The authors explore how the objects of special collections can create meaning for students who work closely with the materials. The authors also confirm the significance of working proactively with donors and building relationships and alliances with book collectors. These partnerships are crucial for collection building and the future growth of special collections libraries.

Chapter 4, “Collecting Communities: The Role of Special Collections Librarians and Archivists in Creating New Life for Community-Based Collections,” by Melissa A. Hubbard, highlights how current and future partnerships between special collections libraries and community-based collectors and collections can “build strong communities through awareness of shared history” (44). Chapter 5, “The Role of the Auction House,” by Selby Kiffer, is written from the perspective of a collector and demonstrates the value of purchasing and publicizing special collections items for libraries alongside the ongoing importance of networking with private collectors. In chapter 6, “Forging into the Future: Facing Digital Realities and Forecasting Endeavors for Special Collections Librarianship,” Athena N. Jackson affirms key technological issues including the intersection of descriptive bibliography, taxonomical analysis, and archival assessment with metadata and digital scholarship. Looking toward the future, Jackson predicts, “There will be more opportunities to cultivate new scholarship, new champions for the historical record, and new collections where all voices—whose context and relevance are captured with our expertise—are heard at the reading room table and in the electronic ether” (59).

Part II of the volume, “The Enduring Object,” includes chapters by Joel Silver (“Lawrence Clark Powell Revisited: The Functions of Rare Books Today”), Paul Ruxin

("Special Collections Libraries and the Uses of the Past (Apologies to Herbert Muller"), and Alice Schreyer ("Everything Old Is New Again: Transformation in Special Collections"). These essays examine the ongoing influence of printed texts, how special collections libraries function as "teaching centers" for students, and how the future of the book will be transformed through descriptive bibliography, textual criticism, geo-referencing and linguistic analysis. Chapters 10 through 13 include essays by Tom Congalton ("Special Collections and the Booksellers of Today"), Daniel De Simone ("Acknowledging the Past"), Ken Lopez ("Literary Archives: How They Have Changed and How They Are Changing"), and Stephen Enniss ("Objects of Study: Special Collections in an Age of Digital Scholarship"). The chapters explore the role of booksellers in the development and enhancement of special collections libraries and how book collectors and sellers assist with "spreading the gospel of the book." The essays also note the ways in which special collections libraries present researchers with historical materials that provide both relative information for scholarship and contextual meaning for students engaged with the items. Enniss' essay demonstrates how current and future technological advances in librarianship and archival science allow for records such as electronic communication to be studied through textual analysis in much greater detail and in much more timely and efficient ways.

Part III, "From Periphery to Center," includes chapters by Jay Satterfield ("Considering the Present: Special Collections Are the Meal, Not the Dessert"), Christoph Irmscher ("Teaching with Special Collections"), Sarah Thomas ("From Siberia to Shangri-La"), and Mark Dimunation ("The Once and Future Special Collections"). The chapters confirm how special collections materials, when used in creative ways in the classroom, can become essential items for building meaning in the lives of students. The essays also identify how an item from a special collections library can become "a gateway to the world" (150) through the demystification of objects and how backlogged collections need funding to be processed to showcase how materials "once enjoyed by a few can now benefit the many" (164). Mark Dimunation concludes the volume by expressing how the core values of special collections librarianship—"to collect, protect, and interpret"—remain essential components of the profession; but, as librarians move into the future, they must be more global-minded in their collecting practices, they should embrace the wide varieties of diverse documentation, and they should adopt a more fluid system of processing and description.

The strength of the publication resides in the wide variety of experienced archivists, booksellers, collectors, donors, and librarians invited to participate in the edited volume. The inclusion of these professionals showcases the interplay and significant roles each have in the development and enhancement of special collections libraries. Long-time prominent voices in special collections librarianship—Daniel De Simone, Mark Dimunation, Athena N. Jackson, and Alice Schreyer—provide key insights into the evolution of the profession from the 1970s to the present. As a result, readers have the opportunity to experience how seasoned professionals at mid-to-large research universities and institutions intellectually wrestle with the current and future state of special collections work.

The book, which provides a rich array of authors from a North American context, could have been improved with the addition of a more inclusive cast of invited participants. This would have broadened the scope of the volume to include more global contributors as well as librarians and archivists from smaller liberal arts colleges and universities. Many of the chapters are written by professionals within the context of larger academic environments and ultimately showcase the voices and dilemmas faced by educational and institutional entities such as Harvard University, the University of Michigan, and Sotheby's. While these stalwart institutions are certainly important

as part of the larger conversation on special collections, the exclusion of certain voices outside the North American context may leave readers in Asia, Europe, and Latin American wondering how they contribute toward the future of special collections librarianship. For example, how are the archivists, collectors, donors, and librarians outside the United States and Canada thinking about the future of special collections in their contexts? What insights might an archivist from India or a special collections librarian from Zimbabwe provide readers who work within contexts outside North America? Also, those professionals who work in smaller liberal arts colleges and universities may have questions raised by the essays that require applicability and adaptability for their varied contexts. Since most of the participants in the volume are part of a larger network of well-funded and well-gifted institutions, the volume would have been enhanced by the inclusion of voices, perspectives, and experiences of smaller university librarians and bookseller networks. How these institutions also work at “forging the future of special collections” in their underfunded and often overlooked contexts would provide helpful perspectives for many of the readers of the volume.

These concerns aside, the volume will be of interest to students enrolled in special collections courses at schools of library and information science and for librarians working in a special collections context. The book provides a helpful sketch on how the profession has evolved since the 1970s, includes important reflections by key professionals who have been and are a part of the conversation and work in special collections, and functions as a go-to text for those invested in ongoing attempts to consider and forecast the future of the book and its digital variations. Special collections librarians and archivists will want to have a copy of this book in their libraries or on their office shelves.—*Christopher J. Anderson, Drew University*

Academic Librarianship Today. Todd Gilman, ed. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017. 248p. Paper, \$55.00 (ISBN 978-1-4422-7875-2).

Todd Gilman has put together a first-rate book on the issues facing academic libraries and librarians today. Moreover, he has selected a genuine who's-who of thinkers and practitioners, each of whom is uniquely able to provide a critical perspective on the fifteen topics included in the book. While some collections of essays are uneven, this volume provides consistently excellent pieces on difficult and complex matters. Each essay is concise, but it is by no means cursory. The volume begins with a superior historical sketch by Deanna Marcum, who definitely has the depth of perspective to offer a thoroughgoing synopsis of the recent past. To augment the history, Marcum connects the past to the present. Barbara Dewey follows with an overview of governance, describing the external and internal intricacies that make up the structural elements of colleges and universities. The scope of inclusion—from state and federal influences all the way to the roles of institutional general counsels and alumni affairs—is extremely difficult to locate elsewhere.

For a summary of primarily internal workings, Starr Hoffman situates the institution and the library within the prevailing organizational structures of academic institutions. She takes the picture further by relating the library to the larger structure and including organizational elements and tasks within the libraries. One of the major accomplishments and benefits of this book is that it is organized progressively, from the broadest and most sweeping institutional topics to those that have most direct import for libraries and librarians. The next essay, by Tahir Rauf, addresses funding and budgeting. This begins with the sources of funding (something that many may not be fully aware of) and proceeds to the internal budgetary matters for libraries. The latter is, of course, complicated, but it is summarized admirably by Rauf. Next, Sarah and Joan Lippincott present a most succinct and helpful outline of the conduct