Book Reviews

Hills, Gordon H. *Native Libraries: Cross-Cultural Conditions in the Circumpolar Countries.* Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Pr., 1997. 361p. $79.50, alk. paper (0-8108-3138-4). LC 96-48793.

This book is an ambitious attempt to consolidate available, yet scattered, information on Native library development in Canada, Greenland, the former Soviet Union and present-day Russian Federation, the United States, and northern Scandinavia, with special emphasis on the circumpolar regions. Although it is not intended to be a manual for the successful operation and management of a Native library, it is replete with examples of plans that worked and those that failed, as well as with suggestions and recommendations based on the author's personal experience. Gordon H. Hills spent three years as the coordinator of a library development project in the Yukon-Kuskokwim delta of Alaska, worked as a librarian for a tribal community college, and did research for a Native American heritage project on the Northwest Coast.

According to Hills, the primary goal of this volume is to provide librarians, managers, and educators with a greater awareness of multicultural librarianship and the role that libraries can play in meeting the unique information needs of Native communities, both in the North and elsewhere. He had many reasons for writing this book, including his own lack of cross-cultural orientation before going to Alaska and his observation that the library profession has been very slow to embrace the need for multicultural programs, courses, and policies. Hills states that "until recently, library education has spent almost no time, attention or resources establishing good liaison with Native communities or training its own students to effectively serve the ethnically diverse American public."

In addition to the author's personal experiences among the Yupik Eskimo of southwestern Alaska and two Native American groups in the contiguous United States, he has used a multitude of print and online sources in writing this book. Especially valuable are sixty pages of source notes and references, many with annotations, that have been updated through 1995. Of equal note is a 73-page chapter on the Russian North, which includes an annotated bibliography and summaries of articles in Soviet library literature from 1957 through 1990. Also included is a small section on library services among the Saami, or Lapps, of northern Scandinavia.

The theme that emerges throughout the book is the need for libraries that service Native populations to be fully integrated into the community so that the information sources they create will be relevant and appropriate for the users. In many cases, it may be desirable for libraries to collaborate with other cultural and social services such as local museums and senior centers in providing programs on literacy, oral history, practical knowledge, or any number of other activities that the people want and need. Another recurring theme has to do with the need for more Native library workers or non-Natives with multilingual capabilities and sufficient knowledge of Native cultures.

Clearly, the author has strong opinions about multicultural librarianship, the role that Native libraries can play in their communities, and the services that urban libraries should be ready to provide to a diverse clientele. *Native Libraries* contains a wealth of description, observation, analysis, and opinion, not only about librarianship but also about community life, oral tradition, subsistence, urbanization, and many other topics. Although I agree with Hills that library development is better understood in a cultural context,

I did find myself at times losing sight of the main focus of the book. This is not easy reading, primarily because of the way the book is organized and the tremendous amount of detail and information it contains. I also found the considerable number of typographical errors somewhat irritating. But that aside, this book should prove most useful for anyone concerned with information services to Native, minority, or immigrant populations.—*Maija M. Lutz, Harvard University.*

Katz, Bill. *Cuneiform to Computer: A History of Reference Sources.* Lanham, Md. & London: Scarecrow Pr. (History of the Book Series, no.4), 1998. 415p. $46, alk. paper (ISBN 0-8108-3290-9). LC 97-7094.

At first glance, this book appears to be an obvious choice for academic library purchase. Its title and table of contents—the latter with detailed and initially appealing section headings such as "Roman contributions," "early word lists," "medieval pilgrimage guides," or "index development"—suggest not only a useful reference work but also rewarding browsing for librarians and library users alike. Its author—a professor at the School of Information Science and Policy at the State University of New York at Albany and a prolific writer, editor, and compiler especially known for his *Introduction to Reference Work,* now in its seventh edition—may be presumed to be knowledgeable on the subject. But to call *Cuneiform to Computer* a disappointment is an understatement.

Katz emphasizes the period from Greco-Roman times to World War Two, and his stated purpose is "to give the lay reader and librarians a brief history of how reference books developed and how they reflect attitudes of their particular period of publication." Each of the nine principal chapters covers "a basic reference form" categorized by the author as: encyclopedias; commonplace books to books of quotations; the reference of time: almanacs, calendars, chronologies, and chronicles; ready-reference books: handbooks and manuals; dictionaries, grammar, and rhetoric; maps and travel guides; biography; bibliography, serials, and indexes; and government documents. Each form is discussed chronologically and is accompanied by extensive endnotes.

The author's methodology, his approach to sources, and how long he has been working on the subject can only be guessed at. The text has apparently been cobbled together from notes taken on a wide range of reading, possibly over many decades and presumably in conjunction with his teaching and editing. Its organization seems loose because Katz has difficulty leaving out anything he finds interesting, whether about individuals, historical trends, or literary genres. His definition of reference sources is broad and includes how-to books, pamphlets, emblem books, and autobiography. To apply the term *history* to a chronological discussion based on snippets from secondary sources, supplemented by unsupported personal opinions and yet lacking an authorial point of view, seems unwise.

On almost every page, the reader is brought up short by maddening typos, unexamined generalizations, and murky style. Readers also will be distracted by the ninety pages of endnotes where digressions, non sequiturs, unnecessary definitions, and nonstandard relationships between text and note abound. Moreover, they will be troubled by what is indexed and how it is indexed. Katz's disinterest in the concept of authority control extends even to his own name: Bill Katz on the title page, and William A. Katz in About the Author (online records attribute different birth dates to these two names).

This title's inclusion in a History of the Book Series, noted in large type on the title page, is exasperating, particularly in the 1990s when the interdisciplinary field with the same name explodes with intellectual excitement and rigorous scholarship. Instead, we find frequent confusions and misstatements about the traditional