Book Reviews

Beagrie, Neil. *National Digital Preservation Initiatives: An Overview of Developments in Australia, France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom and of Related International Activity.* Washington, D.C.: Council on Library and Information Resources and Library of Congress, 2003. 51p. $20 (ISBN 1932326006).

For every librarian and archivist, the digital age is upon us. We may not yet have left the era of the book, but we find ourselves entering new territory with many of us feeling that we are unprepared for the journey ahead. Are we crossing the digital divide or standing on the precipice about to be swallowed whole by a sea of bits and bytes? From patron expectations that everything should be made available online to the stresses of keeping abreast with rapidly changing technology and the development of standards, it is easy to feel overwhelmed. Sometimes it seems difficult to understand how best to navigate in this digital world. One thing is certain: It is important to stay connected to what other archives and libraries are doing with regard to digital projects. The published report, *National Digital Preservation Initiatives*, by Neil Beagrie provides an excellent overview of digital projects and challenges in Australia, France, the Netherlands, and Great Britain.

The National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program (NDIIPP) commissioned a study of international digital preservation initiatives for the purposes of understanding the preservation efforts and challenges faced by information professionals outside North America and for gaining an awareness of major developments in these other countries. The survey was intended to provide a framework for understanding the varied national contexts and digital initiatives in hopes of learning from colleagues' efforts, in other national libraries to preserve digital materials, and for exploring avenues for collaboration. The report is a high-level summary of Beagrie's findings and is not intended as a guide for best practice; it is an excellent overview of the current trends and challenges facing us all.

Beagrie identified several underlying trends affecting the institutions charged with preserving information in this digital world; they are summarized below. Even with the technological advances of recent years, digital information has not replaced traditional means of publication and information storage but, rather, has added to it and thus strained the resources of national libraries and archives charged with storing and preserving both traditional and digital information. Digital information is fragile and dependent upon software and hardware that rapidly becomes outdated. Digital information is distributed differently, with the library holding a license rather than a physical copy. Furthermore, digital distribution goes beyond national boundaries, complicating intellectual property rights and confusing the role of the national library in the preservation of information. Finally, the increasing role of sound and moving-image recordings as part of the cultural record was examined.

Although the national libraries in these four countries have different operational contexts and missions, in the survey they were able to identify several similar concerns that crossed national boundaries and applied to their varied preservation initiatives. They stressed the importance of collaborative efforts but recognized that collaboration required an enormous commitment in time and leadership and diplomacy for it to work well. The importance of staff repeatedly recurred in their comments, indicating that it is important to invest in staff training and to build on

the skills that your staff members possess. They also note that financial support for digital preservation needs to come as a continuing commitment from within the institution rather than depending on temporary, outside funding for preservation projects. The digital environment necessitates that national libraries be more proactive in working with publishers of digital materials and with technology providers in finding private-market solutions for digital preservation. These national libraries recognize the special problems associated with the storage of digital audiovisual media, and the report summarizes the various initiatives undertaken to care for sound and moving-image materials. Finally, the survey identified that there was no ultimate solution to this digital dilemma and that practice and policy would evolve over time.

The Beagrie report offers librarians and archivists in all settings a practical overview of the issues related to the preservation of digital media, and it presents ideas and lessons learned from various projects in Australia and Europe. The report gives a context for planning a digital preservation project but is not a practical how-to-guide identifying standards and methods of best practice. It does offer important insight into the larger problem, which will help us not to get lost in the details or caught up in the excitement of what technology is capable of providing. A side benefit of the report is a wonderful list of information organizations and projects with their associated acronyms. I think that my favorite was LOCKSS or Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe.—*Norma Myers, East Tennessee State University.*

A Compelling Interest: Examining the Evidence on Racial Dynamics in Colleges and Universities. Eds. Mitchell J. Chang, Daria Witt, James Jones, and Kenji Hakuta. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Pr., 2003. 246p. alk. paper, cloth $49.50 (ISBN 0804740348); paper $19.95 (ISBN 0804740356). LC 2001-151608.

The year 2004 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the historic Supreme Court decision *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, which reversed *Plessy v. Ferguson* and made the common practice of racial segregation illegal. In 2003, the consideration of race in higher education admissions policies continued to be a volatile issue. The U.S. Supreme Court reviewed the admissions policy of the University of Michigan Law School, once again thrusting the debate surrounding diversity and affirmative action to the forefront of America's system of higher education.

Editors Chang, Witt, Jones, and Hakuta, all knowledgeable professionals in the social sciences, have compiled a panel of race relations and diversity experts from across the country to "explore the knowledge base on race and intergroup relations in colleges and universities." The result of their effort is *A Compelling Interest: Examining the Evidence on Racial Dynamics in Colleges and Universities.*

The introduction, written by Chang et al., asks a number of probing questions: Are standardized tests such as the SAT the best way to measure academic worth and potential? Who benefits from racially diverse campuses, and in what ways? Should individual students all be judged by the same criteria regardless of group membership? Is affirmative action inherently discriminatory? These questions and more set the stage for an exploration of the racial dynamics at work in colleges and universities. The editors present what the "empirical research has to say about the educational benefits of diversity" and identify what they deem are the "three major parts of the diversity debate: fairness, merit, and the benefits of diversity." Through an extensive review of the social science literature, *A Compelling Interest* presents information on what colleges and universities can and should do to implement and sustain initiatives that "promote the unique benefits that diversity provides."

Presented in six chapters, *A Compelling Interest* covers a broad range of topics, examining many of the relevant is-