

Foundation and held in October 1993.

The resulting fifteen papers by a broad cross section of involved players, from academicians to entrepreneurs to governmental representatives, have been organized into three parts preceded by an introductory chapter, "Whose Knowledge, Whose Genes, Whose Rights," which sets the tone and defines the terms. Part I, "Equity and Indigenous Rights," includes six chapters that explore the varied philosophical issues concerning the possible extension of the Western/Northern concept of intellectual property rights to knowledge of biological resources. In Part II, "Conservation, Knowledge, Property," the authors address ongoing efforts by specific, primarily private, organizations (e.g., Shaman Pharmaceuticals Inc., Native Seeds/SEARCH) to implement the spirit of the Biodiversity Convention; five excellent case studies from different parts of the world are presented. The volume concludes with three chapters on "Policy Options and Alternatives," which address specific legal avenues that are being pursued by such entities as the National Cancer Institute and the International Cooperative Biodiversity Groups Program (funded by the U.S. National Institutes of Health), the U.S. National Science Foundation, and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

This very valuable collection of papers serves to broaden the discussion of intellectual property rights to a truly international level and to place it firmly within the framework of the growing indigenous rights movement. These discussions bring a very useful international perspective to the issues of copyright and patent as we encounter them in our electronic information world, which is primarily Western and Northern in outlook and tradition—*Joan Berman, Humboldt State University, Arcata, California.*

Wiegand, Wayne A. *Irrepressible Reformer: A Biography of Melvil Dewey.* Chicago: ALA, 1996. 403p. \$35. (ISBN 0-8389-0680-X.)

This volume accords Dewey the biography he deserves—grounded on thorough research, clearly written, critical though appreciative, and enlightened by a sound sense of the cultural issues involved in its subject's career. It will interest students of not only library history but also general cultural developments at the end of the nineteenth century.

Americans concerned with books then confronted enormous problems. They somehow had to arrange systematically the rapidly rising tide of volumes printed in the United States and abroad, and also make them accessible to a vastly expanding number of readers and borrowers. Whatever its other virtues, the Library of Congress did not function as a national library, and state, town, and municipal institutions each coped with the general difficulties by following its own eccentric fashion.

The most prestigious collections were private, assembled as at Harvard for instructional purposes or gathered as an avocation by one or several gentlemen—the Redwood at Newport, the Atheneum in Boston, or the Astor,

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Lenox & Tilden in New York, for instance. Impelled by such scholars as Justin Winsor, the early custodians of such collections struggled to preserve, arrange, and catalogue the insistently growing holdings. The practices of older, often larger European institutions were not instructive. Some depended entirely on the memories or informal lists of devoted employees; others simply stacked books by date of publication or accession; and still others devised unique systems, listed in big manuscript folios and only known or understood by the relatively few initiates.

None, however, provided a useful precedent for the American libraries which hoped to serve a large miscellaneous body of readers. Ezra Abbot experimented with cards of uniform size which he could arrange alphabetically in drawers or trays to form a file that could be expanded as needed, thus hoping to maintain a guide to holdings accessible to any literate user. But this initial step toward modernization left unanswered the question of how to arrange the volumes.

The situation challenged the ingenuity of Melvil Dewey, a product of upstate New York, not really a book person but what a later generation would call a "systems engineer." Interested in efficiency, he became a crusader for simplified spelling and the metric system, both indicative of his impatience with traditional wasteful procedures. Before long, he also turned his attention to the chaotic state of book collecting which also offended his sense of efficiency. The decimal-based cataloging system he devised became the American stan-

dard, welcomed in smaller libraries that lacked their own cataloguing staffs, especially when joined to the cards devised by Abbot. Although subject to frequent modification and in many respects out of accord with evolving scholarly needs, Dewey's system continued to form the backbone of libraries in the United States.

As important as his system were Dewey's efforts to develop the professional status of librarians, manifest in his work for the American Library Association and in his services as director of the State Library of New York and as dean of the Columbia University library school. Like teaching (until almost the end of the nineteenth century), work as librarians seemed appropriate for women poorly paid and requiring little skill. Dewey, a skilled organizer and promoter, began to reverse those attitudes.

Ironically, his troubles toward the end of his career stemmed from deficiencies in his own professional behavior. Embarrassing charges surfaced of sexual harassment, never made explicit and perhaps no more than incidental aspects of novel relationships of work that crossed traditional lines of gender. Charges of anti-Semitism were more readily substantiated, indeed never denied. Dewey owned a summer hotel on Lake George at which ALA frequently held retreats, and he openly refused to accept Jews as guests. Ultimately, these controversies led to his ouster from public positions, although his influence in library matters persisted.—*Oscar Handlin, Harvard University.*