

saviors of Western Civilization were by and large high-spirited artisans whose world and work focused on colors, textures, and production processes rather than words, texts, and the higher criticism. But because the object of their cult was The Book, these hard-drinking, colorful characters were numbered among the cultural elect. They made the best for the best. The fact that only few of them had more than a high school education mattered little. In a democratic society, everyman is always a potential saint.

Whether or not you are persuaded by Benton's arguments, you have to admire the wealth of information she has assembled on the business and production practices of her core group. In fact, I suspect that the enduring value of the book lies in the pages and pages of documentation it presents to provide a detailed view of the world of fine printing in the 1920s. An appendix lists some 300 titles that constituted her sample group. *Beauty and the Book* thus gives the first detailed and systematic look at the business of fine printing; and for that alone, it earns a spot on your shelf.

Because the book tilts decidedly toward production rather than consumption, it provides at best a partial view of the phenomenon it wants to explain. In focusing exclusively on relations between American printers/publishers and their clients, *Beauty and the Book* ignores the other streams that fed the market for finely made books. By the 1920s, Britain, France, and Germany had vital and important traditions of fine printing and artists' books, and America was a growing market for them. If the issue is "cultural distinction in America," what better source than Europe to look for tokens and emblems of "having arrived." Benton's book leaves plenty of room for further work on collectors and collections in the early twentieth century.

That being said, *Beauty and the Book* is a smart monograph that helps bridge the gap between the self-conscious attempts of high modernists to wed text and artifact, marvelously captured in Jerome

McGann's *Black Riders* (Princeton 1993) and Jan Radway's study of the emergence of American middlebrow culture, *A Feeling for Books* (North Carolina 1997, reviewed in *C&RL* vol. 59, no. 3). Benton is a scholar who appreciates the fact that not all books are made or bought to be read; books are artifacts as well as texts.—*Michael Ryan, University of Pennsylvania.*

Borgman, Christine L. *From Gutenberg to the Global Information Infrastructure: Access to Information in the Networked World.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Pr., 2000. 324p. \$42, alk. paper (ISBN 0-262-02473-x). LC 99-39906.

Few observers would disagree that the dissemination of information, and the role of libraries in it, are at a major crossroads, with few road signs pointing to the next destination. Print has reigned supreme for centuries, and before that, similar principles prevailed. In the 1950s and thereafter, microforms came briefly to steal part of the show, although more as a preservation and space-saving expedient than as a substitute for print. Despite exuberant predictions, microforms never played their predicted role; they were too inconvenient to use, were poorly indexed in public catalogs and on the reel, and never contributed much to saving shelf space because libraries seldom discarded the materials they 'replaced.' In these instances, whatever the changes, they were relatively modest and never threatened the status of libraries as indispensable intermediaries between information and its seekers.

This is no longer the case. Cyberspace is, or at least is seen to be, as much nemesis of traditional libraries as benefactor. The reasons for this are all too obvious: convenience and efficiency are the two most often advanced. Christine Borgman's study employs a wide canvass in presenting a *status questionis*. On the whole, Borgman steers a middle course between the Scylla of nostalgia and the Charybdis of futurism. She is especially careful to treat issues on a quid pro quo basis, scrupulously and systematically discussing both advantages and disadvantages.

Borgman's work is a *tour d'horizon*, and the scope is international. As a result, few topics can receive extended treatment, but a few discussions, though brief, seemed to be of special interest. These include her discussion of paper/electronics trade-offs; fee versus free; the perennial issue of what to preserve in the original (that is, when are books artifacts and when merely vehicles?); and "the politics of access." Her last two chapters discuss prospects for a "global digital library," a prospect that will incite fear in some and anticipation in others. Whatever the viewpoint, Borgman makes it clear that a wealth of initiatives is bringing the day closer. Another interesting thread is her attention to the value of digitization in preservation. Heretofore a Sisyphean labor, preservation promises to benefit greatly from any number of applications—and in many cases, just in time.

Despite her wide-ranging writ, there are two points that Borgman glosses over. She treats off-site storage only in passing, even though it could ultimately have as great an effect on library collections and access as the electronic world. It might easily serve as a greater incentive to digitization than other factors, for instance, by comparing the costs of the latter with those of new construction, document delivery, and the like. Nor has Borgman anything to say about the potential fiscal perils of replacing print with cyberspace. Whenever this is discussed, it is hard not to conjure up the parable of the spider and the fly. Not even the most ingenuous librarian can have failed to notice that information is the hottest commodity in the marketplace and it is being purveyed without the slightest vestige of altruism. We see very visible and unembarrassed moves toward monopolization, not only at the corporate level, but, more frighteningly, also at the format level. Who among us cannot foresee at least the possibility of being victimized by the kinds of monopolism that is impossible with print?

As Borgman points out, the distinguishing feature of libraries is that they house information, organize it consis-

tently and continuously, and are constantly intent on providing effective access not only to those who come with a name, a subject, or an idea, but also to those who come to do nothing more than gather data on subjects they know little about. The Internet will not often modify the behavior of this last group, but a competent and enthusiastic librarian or two may have more than a fighting chance to do just that. It is considerably easier to walk away from a session on the Internet piqued, bemused, and befuddled, yet with the notion that the data have been domesticated—case closed.

One question is whether *From Gutenberg* will find a readership outside the profession. Even though Borgman addresses users, or at least their concerns, a certain abstractness about her discourse leaves a disembodied feeling. Discussions are usually cast at a rarefied level, and her arguments are seldom illumined by hypothetical case situations that would offer more immediacy. At no point does she wax passionate and thus her own position remains unclear. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but in light of the failed predictions of the past, it might have been well to stake out a position, if only in a preface (there is none). For some, the great unknown is the ability—and the utility—of the mass of users to circumvent libraries and librarians on the cruise through the Internet. Some library users have always managed to do this, whatever the medium. The question, one that must remain hypothetical, is whether they were better off for it. Nowadays, the temptations to give the nearest library a pass are almost overwhelming. The tee-shirts that say "So Many Books, So Little Time" must be updated to "So Much Cyberspace, So Little Time."

Borgman does a good job of embracing the future without forsaking the past. Along the way she sketches any number of issues that readers will want to know more about, which is always the sign of a stimulating work. In aid of this, she provides a substantial, up-to-date bibliography. She does not try to offer a range of

solutions, realizing that the evidence is not up to that; but she does a fine job of bringing most of the issues together into a thought-provoking whole. In today's kaleidoscopic world of information technology, no work can be timeless, but *From Gutenberg* promises to have a more extended shelf life than most.—*David Henige, University of Wisconsin at Madison.*

Conaway, James. *America's Library: The Story of the Library of Congress, 1800–2000.* Foreword by James H. Billington; Introduction by Edmund Morris. New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Pr., in association with the Library of Congress, 2000. 226p. \$45, alk. paper (ISBN 0-300-08308-4). LC 99-058751.

James Conaway's history of the Library of Congress focuses on the thirteen Librarians of Congress who have served our national library for the past two hundred years. The accomplishments of each are examined in the context of contemporary historical events. The first Librarian of Congress, John James Beckley (1801–1807), appointed by Thomas Jefferson, served concurrently as clerk of the House of Representatives. His dual career ended with his death on April 8, 1807, when he was succeeded by Patrick Magruder (1807–1815), the second Librarian of Congress, also appointed by Jefferson. During the presidency of James Madison Magruder continued the dual role of clerk and librarian. In the course of an attack on Washington by the British during the War of 1812, the Library of Congress was totally lost to fire. The library survived due to the purchase of Jefferson's private collection of 6,487 volumes for the price of \$23,950 in the winter of 1814.

Magruder's successor, George Watterson (1815–1829), appointed third Librarian of Congress by President Madison, was the first librarian charged with serving in the position without taking on the additional duty of House clerk. A political activist, Watterson matched wits with General Andrew Jackson and lost when Jackson won the presidency. Presi-

dent Jackson appointed the fourth Librarian of Congress, John Silva Meehan (1829–1861), a former publisher with a more pleasing personality than his predecessor, who served under nine presidents, from Jackson to Buchanan. The apex of his tenure was the designation of the Library of Congress, along with the Smithsonian Institution, as the official depositories for copyrighted works in 1846. The nadir came five years later, in 1851, when fire destroyed 35,000 volumes, including two-thirds of the original Jefferson collection purchased in 1814.

Appointed the fifth Librarian of Congress by President Abraham Lincoln, John G. Stephenson (1861–1864) spent most of his tenure as a colonel in the Union army. He is remembered best for bringing in as his principal assistant, Ainsworth Rand Spofford (1864–1897). When Stephenson resigned from his position at the end of December 1864, Lincoln lost no time in appointing Spofford (1864–1897) as the sixth Librarian of Congress on New Year's Eve that same year. Serving under nine presidencies, from Lincoln through the second presidency of Cleveland, Spofford saw the Library of Congress through its metamorphosis from legislative resource to national cultural institution. Under legislation signed by President Ulysses S. Grant in 1870, the Library of Congress became the sole depository for copyrighted works, a role previously shared with the Smithsonian. The magnificent Library of Congress edifice that today graces the Washington landscape was Spofford's brainchild.

President William McKinley appointed John Russell Young (1897–1899) the seventh Librarian of Congress. Young is remembered for presiding over the opening of the then new Library of Congress and for increasing its international holdings. He died in office in January 1899. Young's successor, also appointed by McKinley, was Herbert Putnam (1899–1939), who served under eight presidents, from McKinley to Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Putnam's forty-year tenure surpassed that of any other Librarian of