

Book Reviews

Beck, Clare. *The New Woman as Librarian: The Career of Adelaide Hasse.* Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow, 2006. 348p. alk. paper, \$45 (ISBN 0810851067). LC 2006-1892.

Beck, professor emeritus at Eastern Michigan University and government documents librarian, has compiled a comprehensive and gripping biography of Adelaide Hasse. Hasse was a well-known librarian and vocal activist of her day. Unlike many of her male contemporaries, Hasse did not produce memoirs of her life. There are neither library buildings nor awards named for her. Hasse has simply vanished from the pages of history. Only recently have her life and achievements been acknowledged by modern government documents librarians, including Beck; by *American Libraries*, which recognized Hasse as one of its top 100 twentieth-century library leaders; and by the GPO, where she served as the first librarian in the Office of Superintendent of Documents and where she had an immediate and long-lasting impact.

Hasse lived from 1868 to 1953, an important time period in the creation of libraries in this country. She was born in Milwaukee to a hard-working and industrious, first-generation German-American family. Her father was a physician who decided to educate Hasse at home, which was often the accepted practice with female children. Hasse never obtained any advanced college training or library degrees but overcame this handicap to become an important library leader. One of her most significant accomplishments was the original taxonomy for the Superintendent of Documents Classification System, which is still used in expanded form today. Hasse initially designed this system to organize and make accessible government documents by agency so these materials could be effectively and efficiently used by government officials

and policymakers, as well as average citizens.

Like a great artist, Hasse's reputation grew after her death. Many of her creations are still in use today, and others have been discovered in library archives and vaults. Her achievements, rather than artworks, are the many classifications, bibliographies, indexes, and reports that she prepared. From this legacy of documentation, including contemporaries' memoirs, internal workplace memoranda, FBI files, and various other sources, Beck skillfully pieced together a cohesive picture of Hasse's life.

Hasse was involved with many important libraries and library organizations. This valuable work furnishes first-hand histories of major library systems and their organizational cultures and of prominent library publications and organizations, including the Los Angeles Public Library, U.S. Government Printing Office, New York Public Library, *Library Journal*, Special Libraries Association, and the American Library Association. Hasse's circle of colleagues and mentors included influential librarians, such as Tessa Kelso, John Shaw Billings, Charles McCarthy, and John Cotton Dana. Hasse was also acquainted with many United States presidents and their first ladies, philanthropists, and other noteworthy figures in society.

Hasse possessed personal qualities that would be highly valued in today's job market. She became an indispensable expert in numerous aspects of library operations, including management, training, budgeting, and marketing. She continually developed new skills, kept abreast of current trends, dealt effectively with change, and maintained a global perspective. Hasse also knew how to showcase her skills and promote herself through publication and professional networking.



Despite her record of achievements, Hasse's professional life was filled with obstacles and controversies, and this book covers them in detail. Hasse's ability to stand out made her a target for men who felt threatened by her visibility as a new kind of single, ambitious, and independent woman, deemed by Beck the "New Woman." (Beck states that the phrase "New Woman" was first used in Hasse's day in an interview with famous songwriter Jessie Bartlett Davis.)

Hasse and other women library professionals of this era endured hostile workplace environments, sexual harassment, the glass ceiling, and other forms of discrimination throughout their careers. This biography shows how an enthusiastic, hardworking, and energetic individual could be kept from reaching her potential, was treated unfairly, and suffered damage to her reputation because she did not conform to a woman's role as subordinate.

Hasse's sexual harasser was none other than library icon Melvil Dewey. Chapter nine, entitled "The Crisis," is especially poignant, because it details her turbulent downfall and removal after twenty-one years as Chief of New York Public Library's Economics Division. It is also ironic that Hasse, unlike her male counterparts, did not have a pension on which to rely in later years, despite the fact that she had worked approximately sixty years.

Each of the twelve chapters, as well as the prologue and the epilogue, ends with an extensive notes section. The text is also complemented by a preface, a list of abbreviations, acknowledgments, and a comprehensive index. Beck compares and contrasts her findings with Dee Garrison's *Apostles of Culture: The Public Librarian and American Society, 1876–1920* (Wisconsin, 2003), which examined the impact of historical events on current librarianship and society's view of libraries. It should also be noted that Beck penned an earlier essay about Adelaide Hasse for Suzanne Hildenbrand's *Reclaiming the American Library Past: Writing the Women*

In (Ablex, 1996). Beck is to be praised for this impressive and long overdue biography of Adelaide Hasse.—*Caroline Geck, Kean University.*

Briet, Suzanne. *What Is Documentation? English Translation of the Classic French Text.* Trans. and ed. Ronald E. Day and Laurent Martinet with Hermina G.B. Angheliescu. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow, 2006. 84p. alk. paper, \$25 (ISBN 0810851092). LC 2005-23628.

In 1951 Suzanne Briet published *Qu'est-ce que la documentation?*, a forty-eight page pamphlet consisting of three essays that defined the field of documentation and placed it within the scholarly context of the era. The translators of this English edition argue Briet's work continues to be relevant because it offers compelling alternatives to the positivistic attitudes that the translators believe pervade today's information science.

Briet was born in 1894 and qualified as a librarian in 1924. At the time she published these essays, she was chief of the reference service at the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris. She had already been heavily involved in the development of the documentation profession, including being one of the founders and leaders of the Union Francaise des Organismes de Documentation. However, only three years after publishing *Qu'est-ce que la documentation?*, Briet took early retirement and until her 1989 death pursued numerous nonlibrary interests, including writing poetical, historical, and biographical works. Michael Buckland contributes a bibliography of Briet's writings and a brief but interesting biography. As Buckland points out, Briet's three essays are manifestos, the first defining the boundaries of the field, the second distinguishing documentation from traditional librarianship, and the third examining societal needs for vigorous, proactive documentation services.

Briet defines a document as "any concrete or symbolic indexical sign, preserved or recorded toward the ends of representing, of reconstituting, or of proving a