Book Reviews

Academic Library Research: Perspectives and Current Trends. Eds. Marie L. Radford and Pamela Snelson. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2008. 315p. alk. paper, $56 (ISBN 9780838909836). LC2008-035286. With new technologies and innovations reshaping the way librarians envision and deliver library services, the field of academic library research has changed dramatically since 1990. These dramatic transformations in academic libraries inspired Marie L. Radford and Pamela Snelson's 2008 edited collection, *Academic Library Research: Perspectives and Current Trends*, which is an update of *Academic Libraries: Research Perspectives*, edited by Mary Jo Lynch and Arthur P. Young and published by ACRL in 1990. Radford and Snelson have produced a timely and useful text that expands upon the Lynch and Young work, covering topics and issues in librarianship that have materialized and flourished since 1990. Academic librarians looking for a thoughtful and interesting summary of current research in the field will appreciate this work, which is No. 59 in the ACRL Publications in Librarianship series.

Both practitioners and researchers alike will find this to be a thorough and easy-to-navigate text. The book contains seven authored chapters and is organized into two parts. Part I, Significant Perspectives and Developments in the Literature, contains five chapters covering the following topics: reference services, information literacy, collection management, knowledge organization, and leadership. This section addresses the key research questions and challenges that have emerged for practitioners since the 1990 edition. And, reflecting a growing concern in the field about assessment, Part II, Current Approaches to Evaluation, consists of two chapters: one on usability testing and the second on LibQUAL+.

Radford and Snelson have brought together an impressive roster of contributors whose names are recognizable to those engaged with the professional and scholarly conversations in the field. Ranging from active practitioners to researchers to LIS professors, the contributors discuss scholarly trends and provide accessible overviews of current research in academic librarianship. Marie L. Radford and Lorri M. Mon begin Part I by surveying the research on reference services, including the virtual methods of providing reference services that have emerged in recent years, and identify key trends, such as distance education and Web 2.0 innovations, that will influence the future of reference services and research. Anita Ondrusek's chapter on information literacy argues that the acceptance of the information literacy movement in higher education and academic libraries represents a philosophical change, or a paradigm shift, in the profession, and she uses case studies to illustrate how practitioners have applied information literacy instructional theories. Mary F. Casserly's chapter highlights important areas of current academic library collection management research, observing that future research is needed in evaluating the effectiveness of developing and managing library collections. Sherry L. Vellucci's chapter addresses the literature on knowledge organization and identifies important factors that influence the research in this field: new technologies and the globalization of information. Mark Winston's chapter closes out Part I, discussing leadership research in library and information science, noting that the body of LIS-specific leadership literature is limited but that the general literature on leadership is substantial. Future research on LIS leadership needs to rely on this

more prevalent general literature. Part II begins with Michael J. Prasse and Lynn Silipigni Connaway sharing techniques and methods of usability testing of library Web sites while also addressing studies on usability testing methodology. Finally, Part II ends with Martha Kyrillidou, Colleen Cook, and S. Shyam Sunder Rao reviewing the literature on LibQUAL+, a library service quality measurement tool developed by ARL and Texas A&M University.

In this collection, Radford and Snelson have assembled an accessible, readable work that addresses important theories and practices, providing a helpful guide to an academic librarian looking to supplement his or her own understanding of current research in the field, enhance the theoretical underpinnings of her own practices, collect practical tips and methods applicable in the library setting, and identify possibilities for future research.

If there is a weakness in this work, it might be that its areas of emphasis are disproportionate. Part I has broader coverage, while Part II could stand to be similarly expansive. Libraries are in the position of constantly having to justify their services and programs to the institutions and constituencies they serve and the bodies that accredit them. It is difficult to imagine an academic library not subject to this increasing emphasis on producing tangible outcomes and providing evidence of the usefulness of its services and collections. The body of literature on academic library assessment is important, substantial, and growing, and Radford and Snelson's collection would have been enhanced by more than two chapters on assessment and evaluation.—*Maria T. Accardi, Indiana University Southeast.*

Mark Bauerlein. *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future (Or, Don't Trust Anyone Under 30).* New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2008. 264p. $24.95 (ISBN 9781585426393). LC2008-006690.

It would be easy to dismiss this book as the frustrated rant of a Baby Boomer professor, a "curmudgeon's grievance" (Bauerlein's phrase; page 174). After all, doesn't each generation, as it ages, and especially when it descends the slope of middle age, rue the current youth subculture? Don't they fret and moan about how the world is going to hell and that it is being led there by the next generation, or, at least, that the next generation is itself gleefully skipping down the rocky way, deep into the nine circles? It would be easy to dismiss Bauerlein (Professor of English at Emory and former Director of Research and Analysis at the National Endowment for the Arts) and his book.

And it would be wrong.

Bauerlein's thesis is simply stated in the subtitle of the book: Digital technologies are stupefying young Americans and are therefore jeopardizing our future as a nation. Anyone who has spent significant time surfing the Web, Googling, or jumping from Wikipedia article to Wikipedia article probably sympathizes with the observation that, after a while, one's attention span seems to diminish, one has less patience for the research process, one starts to avoid longish documents and sustained, lengthy arguments, preferring instead the quick Google fix, the succinct Wikipedia Word. The Web and Web-based technologies are great for information storage and retrieval, they have no doubt revolutionized the world, and those of us who have now spent significant segments of our careers in higher education designing and deploying them know their powers for promoting the Good when appropriately and properly employed. But they definitely have a stupefying effect as well, no matter your age.

Stir these powerful technologies into a narcissistic youth subculture and what you end up with is a largely impermeable demographic bubble filled with teenagers and young adults who use the technologies deftly, constantly, and continuously for intense self-reference and not much else. The technological Indra's Net of