

Book Reviews



Patrick M. Valentine. *A Social History of Books and Libraries from Cuneiform to Bytes*, 2012. Lanham, Md.: The Scarecrow Press, 2012. 203p. alk. paper, \$60 (ISBN 9780810885707). LC2012-020892.

A first response to this book might be doubt. How, one might wonder, can such an epic topic be covered in so few pages? But any suspicions you have will quickly dissolve once you delve into this remarkably comprehensive and deftly written volume that entertains and informs until the very last page. Long before that point, however, it will become obvious that the breadth of the author's knowledge is surpassed only by his ability to sustain a narrative as he nimbly moves from subject to subject and century to century.

The tidy little volume has a few well-chosen illustrations, is indexed and accompanied by a massive but not overly ostentatious bibliography (and a web address for more, which unfortunately may have an error in it; this reviewer was not able to access it). It is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 covers early books up to ca. 1450; the next covers the development of libraries in that same period; books and printing, from the 15th to the 19th centuries is covered in Chapter 3, while a discussion on libraries in the Renaissance and beyond follows in Chapter 4. Modern print and computers comprise Chapter 5; and a succinct summary of the past, present, and future of American libraries is the focus of Chapter 6. In the midpoint of each of these chapters, which play off the tension between books (really the written word) and libraries, there is an "interlude" or long related "sidebar" that the author develops at some length, often adding dimension to the particular discussion, while not slowing the narrative. For example, an "interlude" on book art comes in Chapter 1 and an interlude on burning books bisects Chapter 6. Prefacing each chapter is a string of quotations

from diverse sources. The crowded layout and lack of white space setting these quotes apart from the main text can be a bit of stumbling block to the reader (a design flaw, not the fault of the author). It's a very small discomfort to endure for such a bravura performance.

While specialists may cavil at some of the quick and easy summaries, the book does exactly what the author, a local historian of Wilson, North Carolina, and assistant professor of library science at East Carolina University, sets out to do. Valentine states his aim is not to "catalogue but to spotlight," to sketch rather than being encyclopedic. The scope is worldwide and chronological; and, if a topic is not covered, it is usually pointed out by the author that little study has been done in that field. Intriguing parallels are noted as they reoccur over long stretches of time. Valentine introduces and brings back into focus a variety of themes such as the impact of nationalism and capitalism on printing and libraries, the reaching for and abandoning of new technologies, libraries as reflections of their societies, and similar topics. He also provides quick thumbnail descriptions of prototypical librarians in various eras. With so much information being presented, the book is a sort of bifocal success story in which the background and foreground, equally fascinating, are each perfectly balanced and focused simultaneously. While the surge of information goes on, the author points out various smaller tidbits bobbing on the surface: William Morris volumes commonly being used as doorstops in libraries, women as librarians, the evolution of library architecture, the development of comics and currency, the origin of the term "bugs" in computers, children's publishing, juvenilia, and the like. The author assumes no previous knowledge

of any of these topics and manages to not insult any reader who may be knowledgeable. His work offers a wonderfully succinct history of computers, as well as trends in American libraries after WWII; and it is up-to-date enough to mention recent developments such as the impact of catastrophic events of the "Arab Spring" on libraries.

The book can be used for many purposes. A natural for library schools, it is also accessible to both professors and students; library board members or even development officers, or anyone interested in book arts or collecting. Libraries will find only the title tedious, none of its contents. As one nears the end looking for answers to the conflicts facing our industry and institutions, the reader may find some suggestions and trends, but "history informs ... it does not solve," the author wisely concludes. With such information and perspective gained from Valentine's work, readers will not only be wiser but better prepared for what the future holds for us, books (printed and otherwise), and for our libraries.—Harlan Greene, *College of Charleston*.

David Lee King. *Face2Face: Using Face-book, Twitter, and Other Social Media Tools to Create Great Customer Connections*. Chicago: Information Today, Inc., 2012. 194p. alk. paper, \$24.95 (ISBN 9780910965996). LC2012-013506.

David Lee King, the author of *Face2Face*, has put together a wonderful resource for those just beginning to investigate social media as tools to deepen their connections with customers and patrons. Essentially, this book is about how to transition in-person communication to the Internet. It is geared to reach a broad audience, and most of the examples are equally applicable to businesses, organizations, and libraries both large and small.

The social media services central to this book are Facebook, Twitter, blogs, YouTube, and Flickr. However, a number of other social media services are mentioned throughout the text. It is important to

note that this is not a how-to-use guide for social media, and the author even states this. For those familiar with social media and have already integrated them into their organizations, a lot will be review. However, a few analytical tips or communication techniques mentioned in this book could probably benefit even seasoned experts.

King stresses the importance of allowing the human side to hang out in a casual businesslike manner to appear more approachable and authentic to our respective audiences. He lets readers see the dangers of coming across as "too corporate" and highlights common sense do's and don'ts in most chapters. He also points out the importance of involving our communities in conversation through asking open-ended questions and replying quickly and succinctly to comments as appropriate.

A mix of examples are pulled from King's personal experiences as the Digital Services Director at the Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library (Kansas), as well as other businesses he frequents like coffee and guitar shops, to provide broad perspectives. He takes his own advice and writes casually in a second-person perspective to readers, and this is largely what makes this book so engaging and refreshing.

The usual dry topics of policies and copyright are condensed to the basics. Perhaps these topics are compressed a little too much, because the conversation and further readings are sparse. What King does cover is subtly interspersed throughout the text and written in everyday language. For example, he cites three of Flickr's policies while discussing blogs, one of which is "Don't be creepy. You know the guy. Don't be that guy."

There is an entire chapter devoted to responding to criticism with instances of corporate blunders and successful responses with their customers. A ten-step outline is available for beginners to work through for how and when organizations should respond to online criticism. The