

this side of the Atlantic. Bernard describes the markup scheme used by the taggers, details of the speech transcription conventions developed, analysis tools (mainly SARA, short for SGML-Aware Retrieval Application), types of queries, and much more. The only mystery remaining by the end of this article is why for years there had been no legal access for American libraries and scholars to this resource, as if it were some kind of defense-sensitive rocket technology. Only in March 1999 did the British Library announce publication of a BNC Sampler CD, containing a two-million-word subset of the entire corpus complete with analytical software, with the assurance that it and all future releases of the BNC would be available worldwide.

With this exception, it is in fact the depth and breadth of transatlantic cooperation in the area of library digitization that impresses the North American reader. Electronic Beowulf, for example, arose out of a collaboration between experts of the British Library, the University of Kentucky, and Western Michigan University. Photographic expertise was enlisted from the University of Kansas, and collections that hosted the shoots included Copenhagen and Harvard. Anecdotes—such as the fact that the large photoflood lights used at the Royal Library in Copenhagen blew out the fuses there three times—not only add some human interest to these reports, but they remind us all that without pain there can be no gain.

It may be that most of the articles in this volume will be chiefly of historical interest ten years from now, so rapidly is the landscape changing. But that still gives us several years to browse through them and to share them with frontline administrators and electronically aware faculty, who will no doubt be grateful for the courtesy. General information on the Initiatives for Access Programme and the many projects it brought into life, most of which have now been mainstreamed, is available from the British Library's

online information server Portico at <http://portico.bl.uk>.—*Jeffrey Garrett, Northwestern University.*

Watson-Boone, Rebecca. *Constancy and Change in the Worklife of Research University Librarians.* Chicago: ALA (ACRL Publications in Librarianship, no. 51), 1998. 172p. \$30, alk. paper (ISBN 0-8389-7984-X). LC 98-26935.

Complementing several oft-cited sociological studies of professionals such as physicians, scientists, and college teaching faculty, Watson-Boone's book is an ethnography of the work life of academic librarians at a large public research university in the mid-1990s. The object of her research was not simply to describe and analyze an academic library as a place but, rather, to understand the work of academic librarians. She considered work not merely as a set of tasks and attendant working conditions separate from human actors but also sought to learn how the librarians themselves defined and valued their work. To this end, the author—a librarian, library and information studies educator and researcher, and president of the Center for the Study of Information Professionals—interviewed twenty-nine (about one-third) of the nonadministrative academic librarians at the pseudonymous Midwest Public Research-I University (abbreviated MIRI-U). This book is a description and interpretation of her findings.

For studying the librarians, the author used the qualitative sociological method known as grounded theory—a method that emphasizes induction of theory from actual cases instead of its derivation from a grand, overarching theory. Hers is not a quantitative study. Devotees of statistically based methods might well object to its lack of formal hypothesis testing, rigorous sampling procedures, and quantified responses to questions. Nevertheless, qualitative methods have enabled her to write an illuminating portrait of her informants' work.

Besides an introduction, a bibliography, and an index on method, the book is divided into five chapters and an appendix. The first chapter, consisting of an abstract discussion of work and its mean-

ing to workers, introduces the concept of *work centrality*, defined as “the extent to which a person defines him- or herself through work and expresses a commitment to working.” For the most part, the remaining four chapters, which comprise the core of the study, present an emic, or insider’s, view of their workplace culture. In this perspective, the ethnographer uses the informants’ words to reveal and explicate their cultural categories and themes. Each of the chapters contains quoted excerpts of interviews that illustrate the work-related activities and values of a particular respondent. Simply put, the author lets the librarians speak for themselves, although she places what they say in an interpretive context. Through inductive interpretation, she demonstrates that work is central to the MIRI-U librarians she studied.

In the second chapter, “Tell Me What You Do,” the author distinguishes four categories of academic library work, then tells how librarians occupying those categories regarded their work. Each category—collection management, cataloging, reference, and learning-teaching-training—constituted the librarians’ primary work, conceived by them to be either their most time-consuming cluster of tasks or the tasks by which they defined themselves professionally. As one might expect, differing value orientations correlated with the different kinds of primary work; for example, whereas catalogers found satisfaction in organizing library materials according to established rules, reference librarians prized interacting with users and expediting the relationship between materials and users. All the same, a majority of the respondents, regardless of the identity of their primary work, shared a commitment to the intrinsic rewards of work, placing higher value on work itself than on salary or prestige.

The next two chapters examine in greater detail the meaning and context of the librarians’ work. Chapter 3, “The University and the Library,” examines the relationships between the MIRI-U librarians

and the organizations and personnel that surround, shape, and respond to their work. For the librarians, the most influential organizations are MIRI-U itself and its library system. They see MIRI-U favorably as a university composed of students and faculty, and unfavorably as an impersonal bureaucratic institution. Similarly, they conceptually dichotomize the library’s organization into their own functional units—for example, cataloging, reference, and subject libraries on the one hand, and administration on the other. The librarians expressed strong preference for autonomy, participatory decision making, and decentralization; valued collegiality; and revealed generally negative feelings toward administration. The author argues that all these attitudes are consistent with those characterizing other “think workers” or professionals. The following chapter, “Expressions of Self,” provides additional support for this interpretation.

Although one would be hard-pressed to gainsay its essential points, the concluding chapter, “A Postindustrial Future,” is the least informative section of the book. And although it does present some librarians’ perceptions of the impact of technological change on their work, its focus is clearly not change. Indeed, this leads to a question about the accuracy of the title of the book itself. Despite its title, the book only incidentally describes and analyzes the phenomenon of change in the work life of librarians. It is evident from both the text and the appendix on method that the study was not designed to measure change either prospectively or retrospectively. It is not, in fact, a study of change. A more apt title might have been “The Work Life of Research University Librarians.”

With minor exceptions this book is well conceived, clearly written, and carefully edited. Most academic librarians who read it will be impressed by the fact that the work and attitudes of the librarians at MIRI-U seem familiar, if not identical, to their own. Recommended for all academic librarians. —James D. Haug, *East Carolina University*.