

Information Studies, chose to focus on ALA. The result is a study of what the most outspoken librarians of the day were saying to one another. Knowing what actually took place in libraries is, of course, a more difficult historical undertaking. Nonetheless, "Whose culture is library culture?" remains a question not only for the future, but also for the past.—*Bob Nardini, YBP Library Services.*

Sapp, Gregg. *A Brief History of the Future of Libraries: An Annotated Library.* Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Pr., 2002. 295p. alk. paper, \$65 (ISBN 0810841967). LCCN 2001-49550.

This book contains five essays that survey the library literature, written between 1876 and 1999, for writing and research concerning the future of libraries. The first essay, which serves as the introduction, covers the bulk of these years, from 1876 to 1977, and the four chapters that follow divide the remaining time. Each provides a composite rendering of the prominent themes and trends forecasted therein. Gregg Sapp, science librarian at the State University of New York at Albany, presents the alternative takes and controversies surrounding the contemporary future thinking, distributing his attention among visionary writing, manifestoes, and the strategic initiatives and agenda-setting documents used to reach perceived goals.

Each of the four chapters is followed by an annotated bibliography of library futurology. There are about 100 to 300

entries in each section, including those cited in the corresponding chapters. Sapp's original annotations, approximately 250 words each, abstract and contextualize the citation by drawing out both its main thesis and its relevance to the library discourse of its time. The result is a unique and enlightening portrait of a profession in a constant state of becoming. It will be appreciated by new librarians, as well as by managers and administrators looking to set the course of their own careers or institutions.

In his introduction, Sapp reviews, in condensed form, the important anticipatory literature of a profession organizing its agenda and the conceptual framework on which it will be built. He begins with the landmark year of 1876, where, with the Centennial Exhibition as its backdrop, the nascent American Library Association opened its conference in Philadelphia with speculations about its future. Questions about the library's principal functions, the education of librarians, and the development of bibliographic and technical tools abound. The early engagement with issues that seem remarkably pertinent today reveals the plot of Sapp's book. One quickly learns that librarians are a self-conscious breed, with a heightened awareness of the vulnerability of the institution and their roles within it. Sapp makes the astute choice of opening the volume by quoting Ranganathan's fifth law of library science: "the library is a growing organism." History shows this is true. Sapp's *A Brief History of the Future of Libraries* demonstrates that, like an organism, the library and the profession have adapted in order to survive.

In the literature reviewed here, the library is often presented as a model for the future development of an egalitarian and intellectual society, just as the "End of Libraries" is predicted by others. One senses great optimism as one reads the utopian visions of yesterday. But these visions are often juxtaposed, at times abruptly, with darker horizons, even tinges of panic.

The bulk of the book is focused on the years between 1978 and 1999, a time like

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our own, where information technology coupled with economic changes exert tremendous pressure on the institution and profession. Sapp uses F. W. Lancaster's *Toward a Paperless Society* (1978) to set the stage for a continuing debate about the role of libraries in a digital environment. Here we see references to the "scholar's desktop" and "electronic communication" as agents confronting the traditions and changing the identities of libraries.

It is undeniably true that technology can function as an agent of transformation, but less certain is the stability of values and tradition. Although some will read this history of the future of libraries as a measure of the library's ability to circumscribe, adapt, and integrate technological innovation to their goals, Sapp's book also documents the library as an institution with mutating and oscillating functions. In many texts outlining the "History of Libraries," the traditional goals of the library are represented as firmly cast upon the institution's inception or portrayed as a progressive evolution. Sapp's chronicle of voices serves to deconstruct these notions, as the library, in this speculative literature, is placed again and again on the precipice of obsolescence. Rather than the embodiment of established concepts, the library is revealed as a contested site, where enterprise, personality, and initiatives are played out against the backdrop of societal forces. The ensuing dance between purpose and means is interesting because speculative writing is by form, social and political as well as often emotionally volatile.

I suppose any annotated bibliography about futurology would be of equal interest, but what sets this volume apart is the role of its subject. The library, even in its most ambiguous manifestation, serves as a medium between the past and the future society. This institution serves as a metaphor for ideas about public space, intellectual freedom, equal opportunity, as well as technical prowess, cultural wealth, and social structure. Visions of its future are charged with social value, and

the writings here are capable of reflecting contemporary ideology. Because libraries are placed within the crucible of our technological and information revolutions (and, in fact, libraries, as recorded here, have often led and focused the forces of these revolutions), the library is both a harbinger and an agent of transformation in a wider informational/technological society.

As such, Sapp's effort will surely appeal to sociologists and historians of technology. However, because of his economical display of the vast amount of resources included, one will have to read closely. Although providing some context, Sapp does not afford space for an analysis of motives, social or personal, behind each author's forecasts. Also, little attention is paid to the international forces weighing in and influencing the development of library discourse; it is enveloped quite tightly in the U.S. context.

A Brief History of the Future of Libraries is extremely useful for librarians seeking to trace the evolution of contemporary library theories and goals, as well as those with the lingering recollection that "they heard that one before." They probably have, for it is not that the future is unwritten but, instead, that the future has been written in infinite ways.—David Michalski, *University of California at Davis*.

Lives in Print: Biography and the Book Trade from the Middle Ages to the 21st Century. Eds. Robin Myers, Michael Harris, and Giles Mandelbrote. New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Pr.; London: British Library (Publishing Pathways), 2002. 208p. \$39.95 (ISBN 1584560940; 0712347968). LC 2002-28304.

One of the functions of biography is to view history through a lens focused on the individual. This collection of essays (the product of a conference held in London in 2001) takes just this approach to the history of books and publishing. As with all efforts that focus on the particular and the specialized, some of these essays are more successful than others at drawing in the reader. All seek to illumi-