

conclusions based on evidence from different times and places. He also provides factual information, such as prices charged by proofreaders or the price for the dedication of a play (five to ten guineas from the Revolution to the time of George I). He uses anecdotes to reveal human character. He is really a social historian, one of the first to study books and reading as social phenomena developing over time. He writes: "the favorite book of every age is a certain picture of the people. The gradual depreciation of a great author marks a change in knowledge or in taste."

D'Israeli is an enlightenment thinker with robust confidence in taste, proportion, and progress, but his intellectual integrity saves him from false optimism. The idea that monastery libraries preserved civilization he calls a myth: "They were indefatigable in erasing the best works of the most eminent Greek and Latin authors, in order to transcribe their ridiculous lives of saints on the obliterated vellum." The new is not always best; although "our present paper surpasses all other materials for ease and convenience of writing," ancient ink was far better than modern. D'Israeli defends freedom of speech and the rights of authors, recommending that authorial copyright extend one hundred years. He has a healthy skepticism about the role of politics, money, vanity, and venality in all walks of life, including book publishing.

Factual errors have been found in D'Israeli's work, and the material is often fragmentary and whimsical. Spevack presumably selected the best material for this edition and organized it into thematic chapters, but the reader still has to slog through thick paragraphs and even pages of only minor interest. There is something ridiculous about the conjunction, in a section on destruction of manuscripts, of Aristotle and Lady Mary Worthley Montague. Catalogs of curiosities—minute writing, forgeries, voluminous authors,

bad book titles, handwriting teachers, and so on—grow tedious. The mock epic tone (Alexander Pope was one of his favorite authors) also wears thin, although D'Israeli's wit can sometimes be marvelous. On the theme of dedications, he writes: "Never was the gigantic baby of adulation so crammed with the soft pap of *Dedications* as Cardinal Richelieu. French flattery even exceeded itself." Or, on the metaphysical poets: "They cast about them their pointed antitheses, and often subsided into a chink of similar syllables, and the clench of an ambiguous word."

Paradoxically, the most impressive passages in this potpourri of a book are D'Israeli's hard-won insights into the laws of history and human nature. By studying the romantic and mysterious origins of printing, he discovers that inventions of this nature are always gradual. His *aperçus* may be pithy, but they are never epigrammatic in the Oscar Wilde style, because they always come out of a deeper context. "Writing is justly denominated an art," he writes. "I think that reading claims the same distinction." There follows an acute discussion of the psychology of reading, culminating with the observations that "there is something in exquisite composition which ordinary readers can never understand" and "the pleasure of abusing an author is generally superior to that of admiring him." At times, D'Israeli's insights, like blazing comets, seem to come out of nowhere. "We like remote truths, but truths too near us never fail to alarm ourselves, our connexions, and our party."

This book is recommended for libraries with collections on the history of books and reading or on literature. D'Israeli is not for the fainthearted, but those inclined to make the effort will be impressed. —*Jean Alexander, Carnegie Mellon University*

Dilevko, Juris, and Lisa Gottlieb. *Reading and the Reference Librarian: The Impor-*

tance to Library Service of Staff Reading Habits. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2004. 264p. alk. paper, \$45 (ISBN 0786416521). LC 2003-21596.

"This book told me more than I wanted to know about penguins," the punch line to an ancient gag about book reports, could be applied to this book, apart from the book's simultaneously telling one too much, and not enough, about the reading habits of librarians and the benefits deriving from them. It's especially sad when the book is about a topic that one thought one did want to know about. The authors have put much too much effort into minutely dissecting a rather limited range of information, while at the same time not really doing much at all to suggest why it is that people whose profession is based in the use of books ought to read, beyond what would have seemed to be rather obvious reasons. What impels Dilevko and Gottlieb is a sense that library education is not emphasizing reading enough, in rushing to embrace electronic information resources, and/or that people entering librarianship are less educated than we, and our predecessors, were.

Little information is given to support this view, however—just enough to suggest that someone might fruitfully study the situation. This book is not that study. Students in several classes taught by Dilevko in the Faculty of Information Studies at the University of Toronto were assigned to administer e-mail questionnaires to samples of academic reference librarians, public library reference librarians, and college and university faculty. In this review, I'm not discussing the public librarian portion of the book, though the findings there aren't different from academic librarians. (And, I might suggest tactlessly, that's partly because the picture given of academic reference service is much closer to public libraries than most of us who are academic reference librarians actually experience.) The samples of librarians were drawn from sections of the *American Library Directory*, and faculty members were sampled from institutions taken from Web-based alphabetical lists of North American higher educational institutions. Of 1,164 academic librarians, 539 (46.3%) responded, as did 236 (15.3%) of 1,540 faculty, in thirteen "broad

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fields of study" in the social sciences and humanities.

Librarians were asked twenty-three questions. Three (only) served to situate the responses in a context: How many FTE librarians in the respondent's institution provide regular reference service? How many hours did the respondent do so in an average week? How many years had the respondent done reference? There were no questions about the academic background of respondents. The remaining questions dealt with how often one read on one's own time; what sorts of books, periodicals, and newspapers were read; and, not least, how all this reading affected one's work as a reference librarian. Care was taken to ensure sampling across the various categories of higher education from the Carnegie Classification.

The bulk of the book presents the results of the surveys. Types of reading materials are discussed, as are how personal reading affects reference service, as well as other professional capacities such as collection development and gaining rapport with faculty. Quotations from responses are the bulk of the text, creating a highly anecdotal sense of the topics. Because next to no background information about respondents was asked, and even that bit isn't mentioned with respect to the statements quoted, it's hard to know exactly what to make of the many experiences and opinions stated. The authors occasionally refer to a respondent as from a liberal arts college or a research university, but in general it's impossible to detect any trends or any variation among institutions or types of institutions. To the extent that some respondents stated that they didn't read much, or didn't see much connection between reading and their profession, the authors can say they've documented an unexpected finding, if one that cannot be shown to be a change in librarianship, as there's no historical or demographic analysis.

There's a far more disturbing quality to the authors' discussion of reading and academic librarians, one that underlies my snide remark about academic and public libraries above. Again and again and again, respondents are quoted, approvingly, in statements to the general effect of "If I hadn't read *x* (book, magazine, newspaper article), I couldn't have answered the student's question." We've all had this experience, and it's pleasing when we do. However, with the slight exception of those of us in highly specialized research libraries, where the collection defines most users, what drew most of us into reference work is precisely the fact that one never knows what the next question is going to be. The stimulation comes from the variety and the challenges. There's also the related idea that those of us in academic libraries are teachers—we don't provide "answers" to questions, we help users determine which sources will provide the information they need. None of that work is acknowledged in this book, other than in the separately treated faculty views.

To repeatedly quote librarians about how what saved them in the face of questions was a serendipitous encounter with a relevant article is demeaning to what is our basic stock in trade: the ability to figure out what to use to find answers to any question, not least ones that are completely unfamiliar. I enjoy being able to assist users in my own areas of expertise but feel more accomplished when I can do so in areas I do not know. We've all had to deal with very difficult questions; indeed, the homework questions in my reference class in library school were all ones that had been challenging for the reference desk at an internationally ranked research university. But most of the questions for which these respondents were grateful for having read something that gave them a clue weren't at that level; more often they're about unraveling a garbled title

for a best-seller or confusions such as the “famous lawyer” named “Rovey Wade.”

To the limited extent that Dilevko and Gottlieb show that there are librarians who don't read, or that some librarians, on the face of their responses, do not seem able to figure out how to deal with a question unless they've run into it before, the authors are justified in calling for more attention to promoting personal reading by librarians. But absent any sense that, say, younger librarians read less (age wasn't asked except implicitly by asking years in reference) or that too many librarians don't read (roughly 11% of the academic librarians didn't think reading affected their jobs; a similar percentage never read national newspapers), the authors seem to be passionately advocating that we do what, in reality, almost all of us already do.

The faculty survey has some potentially more newsworthy findings, though here, too, the absence of demographic and other background material limits analysis. The survey and the analysis would have been more useful as a journal article and would doubtless be read by many more academic librarians had this been the case.

Teaching faculty members were asked four context-setting questions about broad field, specialty within it, faculty rank, and highest degree awarded by respondents' institutions, along with eleven questions about their experience with reference librarians and suggestions for what the latter might do to improve or maintain subject awareness. They were

asked for an assessment of the subject-specific knowledge of the reference librarians with whom they interacted, as well as details of specific interactions with the librarians who shaped their opinions of them, both positive and negative.

The faculty opinions are interesting for what we learn about ourselves, from the perspective of (some of) our most knowledgeable users, and (possibly undercutting the former) about what the teaching faculty do and do not know about who we are and what we do. As with the librarian surveys, the reader is left unsure what to make of the many specific quotations offered. Is the faculty member with a low opinion of the librarian responsible for his or her field in an institution where one would expect highly trained specialist librarians or in one that's not a research institution, not attempting to provide such a range of expertise in its library professional staff. Such information is in the surveys, but not in the opinions as presented in the book.

In discussing the things that faculty suggested for improving the skills of subject librarians, a recurring element was attendance at meetings of learned societies for the purpose of becoming more aware of people, institutions, trends, and networks. Fair enough. That the quoted faculty members don't seem aware that many librarians routinely do attend such meetings, for exactly the reasons given (and, in addition, because a goodly number of academic librarians are publishing scholars in academic subjects) is perhaps understandable, if sad. But the authors don't seem particularly aware of this either. Indeed, in the African Studies Association, three professional librarians have been elected by the whole association to its board of directors in the past decade. Readers of this journal might note another omission by Dilevko and Gottlieb: no mention is made of the various subject-specific sections of ACRL, which, in my area at least, provide the only national forum—and

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virtually the only forum at all—for librarians in the field. The network this fosters is of fundamental importance in my doing what I do. (Indeed, it's why I'm writing this review.) Because the book was assembled from essentially anonymous opinions from a rather brief questionnaire, *Reading and the Reference Librarian* raises more questions than it answers, especially for librarians pondering professional development for themselves and their colleagues.

It should go without saying that we all should spend free time reading, even when time is precious. When "so many books to read, so little time" forces choices, however; there are many more books worth reading than this one.—Gregory A. Finnegan, *Harvard University*.

Magazines for Libraries: For the General Reader and School, Junior College, College, University, and Public Libraries, 12 ed. Ed. Cheryl LaGuardia, with Bill Katz and Linda Sternberg Katz. New Providence, N.J.: Bowker, 2003. 1,120p. \$225 (ISBN 0835245411).

Magazines for Libraries, now in its twelfth edition, continues to evolve in order to keep up with the massive changes in how serials are published. This print edition may be the last of its kind. The first question this reviewer had when examining the volume was, When will this resource move to a Web format? According to sources at Bowker, subsequent editions may indeed be redesigned in order to become Web based. Time will tell.

Bowker conducted focus groups to find out what publishers and users needed and wanted from this publication. The twelfth edition includes new features that address a number of trends, including a listing of journal aggregators and the inclusion of abundant statistics that break down the contents in new and useful ways. Retained from earlier volumes is the listing of titles deleted since the last

edition, and it continues to be useful. As in past editions, all previously published entries were reviewed thoroughly and revised, if necessary.

However, I do have a few minor complaints. The "How to Use This Book" pages are buried between the statistics and the abbreviations; it would be more useful up front, after the preface. Electronic-only publications are segregated at the end of each subject listing, even though in the preface it is acknowledged that "the novelty of electronic journals has worn off, and they are now considered to be simply essential." If this is so, then why not list the essential e-publications along with the print without segregating them, especially as so many of the print journals are also now available online (and when that is the case, it is duly noted)? This, of course, leads back to the compelling case for this reference work itself to become Web based because many print-only journals are rapidly adding an online component or else are ceasing in print altogether. A print reference work such as *Magazines for Libraries*, by its very nature, is out-of-date before even going to press. One last, small complaint is, Why are the publications listed under the topic of "Serials" separate from, rather than included with, Library and Information Science? It seems that subtopics within library and information science should be listed in a similar fashion as they are for other broad subjects such as Business and Medicine.

Cheryl LaGuardia and the many individuals (and it is nice to see the Katzes retaining a consulting role) that comprised the team of reviewers certainly had their work cut out for them and they completed their task admirably. This volume is most useful to reference staff who assist library users in the identification of the best journals in a field and to collection development selectors, regardless of whether they are trying to justify the