

credit-bearing library research classes to freshman students, not only enhancing their critical thinking skills, but also potentially developing students' confidence and leadership abilities.

"Discipline-Grounded Learning Experiences" is the largest section and covers experiences within specific disciplines in the academic institution. Authors discuss using role playing to teach history, the value of tertiary sources in the humanities, information seeking within STEM, the use of an asynchronous virtual lab, and integrating active learning into library instruction. Building on basic knowledge and reference resources, students can expand their literacy skills in order to utilize them throughout their college tenure as well as into their future careers.

Throughout the three parts of this volume and across the chapters, authors integrate and apply transformative learning theory into their own practices often redefining the classroom and ultimately changing their own instructional approaches. This pedagogy is used with multiple other tools, theories, and practices to increase the value of library instruction, some of which include the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*, the Association of American Colleges & Universities Information Literacy VALUE Rubric, the Dunning-Kruger Effect, *Writing as a Mode of Learning*, and Cranton and Carusetta's five-faceted model of authenticity. The wide variety of pedagogy, tools, and practices can have transformative learning theory applied to them which demonstrates its applicability to the practice of information literacy instruction.

Paired with the first two volumes (*Transforming Ourselves* and *Transforming Our Programs, Institutions, and Profession*) in the *Instructional Identities and Information Literacy* series, *Transforming Student Learning, Information, Seeking, and Experience* would be a welcome addition in the collection of any academic librarian, especially those with a focus on information. This would also make a great set for the circulating collection of any college or university with an Information, Library Science, or Information Literacy degree program. The experiences shared in all three of these volumes are valuable to those working in the academic library field, especially given the lack of classes dedicated to teaching and pedagogy in most college programs which can leave many academic librarians feeling unprepared for one shot lessons or research consultations. Reading about a wide variety of experiences and results can help those in librarianship, both novice and experienced, to find their own instructional identity. —Stephanie Cicero, *Interim Library Director/Research and Instruction Librarian* Roberts Wesleyan University

Big Fiction: How Conglomeration Changed the Publishing Industry and American Literature, Dan Sinykin. Columbia University Press, 2023. Softcover, \$30.00. 9780231192958



Big Fiction: How Conglomeration Changed the Publishing Industry and American Literature brings fresh analysis to fiction publishing in the United States. As an English professor with an appointment in quantitative theory and methods, as well as co-founder of a collective focused on post-1945 literary and cultural data, the author Dan Sinykin is uniquely positioned to produce this ambitious work of literary history. *Big Fiction* centers on conglomeration—the corporate trend of acquiring companies across industries—and the impact this business practice has had on fiction publishing in the United States from the 1960s to present. In a seemingly flurry of consolidations and take-overs within a short amount of time, the publishing industry trans-

formed from being relatively small, privately held businesses to those same small publishers being gobbled up by large corporations in spite of antitrust laws (p. 5).

Sinykin considers both the arguments for, and the criticisms of, conglomerate consolidation in publishing; he pulls together the gamut of responses into a detailed illustration of conglomeration's dynamic and transformative impact across all corners of the industry's ecosystem. The book's chapters are divided by publishing sector. The primary focus is on the mass market and trade sectors; the book includes the nonprofit and independent spheres to a lesser degree. Across sectors, Sinykin identifies the beginning of the shift towards corporations accumulating smaller companies within publishing such as the purchase of New American Library in 1960 by the news organization, Times Mirror, followed by a landslide of additional mergers and acquisitions across the industry (p. 5).

Proponents argue that publishing conglomerates operate as a formal, corporate business bringing all the fragments together under one entity — authorship, acquisition, editing, printing, and marketing — while making the process easier to manage as well as more profitable (p. 12). However, the superorganism of the conglomerate is motivated by risk management and profitability; it secures its input from a number of stakeholders including editors, marketers, literary agents, distributors, bookstore chain buyers, critics, and business analysts (p. 12). Sinykin challenges the popular misconceptions of authors as solitary figures and nonprofit and independent publishers as free agents, operating separately from conglomerate publishing. He claims that large publishing houses encourage the myth of the solitary writer as an appealing fiction which actually obscures the more nuanced reality of conglomerate authorship. The book gives voice to the stories of many such individuals whose influence was and is widespread in the publishing industry but whose names are largely unknown in their role outside of writing.

Big Fiction also examines larger societal trends and their impacts on conglomerate authorship across time and sector. Such forces include the increased prominence of the social sciences, multiculturalism, creative writing programs, literary prizes, sexism, postmodernism, and technology. The author highlights several technologies, such as television, computers, the Internet, and BookScan (a data tool for tracking book sales), charting their influence on fiction publishing. For example, BookScan enabled publishing houses to consider the historical profitability of comparative titles when making acquisition decisions, which remains a common practice across the industry (p. 67).

Sinykin concludes with a nod to the future, highlighting recent and contemporary trends within the publishing space, such as the prominence of ebooks, audiobooks, social media, labor strikes, and DEI priorities. For example, the author examines a selection of industry up-and-comers and identified trends in publishing, such as the amplification of underrepresented voices as a common value across the group and the acknowledgment that books can eliminate borders and bring readers from diverse cultures together regardless of geopolitical barriers (p. 221).

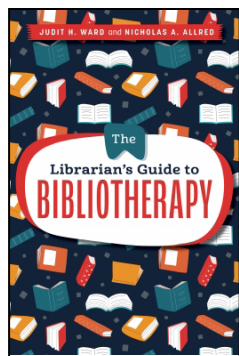
Big Fiction presents well-supported arguments for the significant — yet somewhat intentionally camouflaged — influence of conglomeration on American fiction, providing evenhanded representations of the wide-ranging opinions about publishing's failings and triumphs from the past and present. Sinykin builds on previous publishing history as well as his own analyses. He incorporates a wide range of additional sources including first-person accounts from industry insiders, authors, biographical sketches, literary criticism, and trade journalism (e.g. *Publishers Weekly* content). The book's narrative is not only informative but fascinating, full of intriguing industry vignettes, such as one about a prominent author saving the hat

that another author wore to his Pulitzer Prize ceremony with the anticipation of wearing it in the same circumstance one day in the future (p. 87), and another about a bestselling literary fiction author and industry insider both advocating for black authors and being treated like a “race traitor” by some black editors (p. 112).

Because the book is organized by publishing sector rather than chronology, Sinykin repeats some pivotal events to provide historical touchstones, such as Random House firing long-reigning president Robert Bernstein in 1989 and, soon after, André Schiffrin, another company stalwart. Despite this useful convention of orienting milestones, the inclusion of a timeline with the book’s end matter, along with the existing glossary of publishing figures, would have provided readers with an additional tool to help place the industry’s complex history in time and context.

Overall, the book is highly recommended for academic libraries supporting American studies, history, and literature researchers. The author provides an illuminating and riveting examination of American fiction publishing and challenges the reader to look closer at oft-repeated assessments within the field. The book also creates a strong foundation for future works to further expand on areas that Sinykin either deliberately omitted (such as non-fiction and international fiction publishing) or trends that are still very much in the process of emerging. —Marilyn Reside, *Electronic Resources Librarian*, CUNY Graduate Center

The Librarian’s Guide to Bibliotherapy, Judit H. Ward and Nicholas A. Allred, ALA Editions, 2024. Softcover. 224p. 9780838936627. \$49.99.



Avid readers know the feeling of being emotionally affected by books, of seeing their experiences reflected in a way that helps them reach greater understanding, or of encountering new perspectives that help them cultivate empathy. Books can bring readers solace, inspiration, guidance, and even wisdom. The insight at the core of bibliotherapy is that these benefits are not confined to chance, private encounters between individual readers and their books. By choosing texts intentionally, providing context, or asking thought-provoking questions, clinicians can guide patients in deriving therapeutic value from the experience of reading.

Replace “clinicians” with “librarians” and “patients” with “patrons,” and some aspects of bibliotherapy can be implemented in a library setting. Of course, bibliotherapy as a library service absolutely should not be confused with bibliotherapy as a treatment approach in a clinical setting. Librarians are rarely qualified, to say nothing of licensed, to practice mental health care, and an enriching library program is not an adequate substitute for formal counseling (51). The authors are careful to emphasize this distinction to the librarians who read this guide. Likewise, librarians offering bibliotherapy-informed programming should take similar care to communicate the distinction to their participants.

But with that caveat firmly in place, Ward and Allred argue that librarians possess many bibliotherapy-adjacent abilities already (xvi). Librarians who answer reference questions or perform readers’ advisory are skilled in using their collections to meet their patrons’ intellectual and recreational needs. Implementing bibliotherapy-informed programming entails concentrating instead on patrons’ emotional or therapeutic needs, but significant parts of the experience transfer. The authors use the term “accidental bibliotherapists” to refer to librarians whose work sometimes includes helping patrons find reading material that might serve