

In the coming decades, many colleges will have to forfeit their cherished autonomy if they hope to avoid extinction and extend their mission into the future. Recognizing that mergers are not indictments against administrators' stewardship but transformative opportunities for a consolidated, rebranded institution to continue serving generations of students is a radical departure from traditional leadership philosophy in academia. However unconventional, acceptance of this reality will separate the small colleges that adapt and survive from uncompromising peers that will inevitably close. As Mark La Branche, former president of Martin Methodist College frankly evaluates, "One of the obstacles to 'merger' thinking is in seeing a merger as a failure, or giving up the struggle that our institutions somehow win year in and year out. If we employ 'mission' thinking, then an opportunity to preserve, enhance, and expand the mission becomes a huge win" (31-32).

Throughout the work, authors describe several key elements necessary for ensuring that a union between institutions is mutually beneficial and successful. Paramount of all is proactivity: "Without question, the most important common lesson is that the time to contemplate any form of merger is before it becomes a last resort" (149). Multiple contributors stress the significance of proactively seeking and planning mergers. When administrators are strategic and deliberate in pursuing mergers, their institutions are better poised to secure favorable terms than when reactive campus leaders turn to them in desperation. The sooner administrators of vulnerable colleges begin this process, the better their chances for successful outcomes.

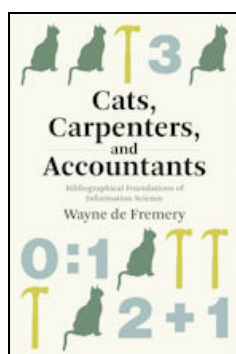
One criticism of *Inside College Mergers* is that multiple contributors cite questionable sources for quotations attributed to famous figures. Robert E. Clark II does this no less than three times in his chapter. While employing thought-provoking quotes to reinforce a concept or position is a timeless rhetorical strategy, such excerpts (as with all other types of information) must be drawn from credible sources. Websites like quotes.net and setquotes.com are not legitimate sources. Given academia's rigorous research standards, it is not unreasonable to expect more from administrators who presumably demand(ed) the best from their students and faculty.

This critique, however, does not detract from the value of the work. *Inside College Mergers: Stories from the Front Lines* provides a timely compilation of case studies that will guide other administrators in leading their vulnerable institutions to more sustainable futures. While college presidents and upper-level administrators will benefit the most from perusing this volume, scholars of higher education will also appreciate this addition to the literature. Academic librarians are encouraged to carefully consider the perspectives presented throughout the work to better understand the challenges their campus administrators may face for years to come. After all, our efforts to advocate for our libraries are most effective when they are guided by informed, realistic expectations. Academic libraries of all sizes, especially those serving small private schools or institutions with higher education graduate programs, should consider adding this title to their collections. —A. Blake Denton, *University of Southern Mississippi*

Cats, Carpenters, and Accountants: Bibliographical Foundations of Information Science,

Wayne de Fremery, MIT Press, 2024. 296 p. Softcover, \$45.00. 9780262547598.

The subtitle of Wayne de Fremery's entry in MIT Press's History and Foundations of Information Science series contrasts its intriguing title. de Fremery, Professor of Information Science and Entrepreneurship at Dominican University of California, is aware of the potential difficulty in engaging readers in a discussion of the relevance of bibliography today.



"Bibliography?" he asks, seeming to sense our incredulity (p. 1). While "bibliography" perhaps brings to mind only citational practices or evokes memories of "bibliographic instruction," de Fremery is insistent on using the term. He pushes against the notion that bibliography as a field of and a tool for study has ever gone away, writing, "The contrarian truth that I am pursuing is that bibliography could hardly be more integral to our intellectual and creative lives than it is now" (p. 1).

For readers less familiar with bibliography's history (such as this reviewer) or confused by the term's uses, de Fremery defines "bibliography" early on as "the study of representations and the practice of producing them" [p. 1]). In many ways de Fremery enacts the methods of bibliography he describes in returning to the definition again and again, exploring how it has been deployed in the service of other fields and in its own right as a discipline. While librarians may dwell primarily among representations (lists, records) of texts ("enumerative bibliography"), the field also encompasses the historical and literary-critical study of representations *as* texts ("descriptive," "analytical," and "critical" bibliographies). The debates about the dividing lines among these approaches, and even their status as bibliography proper, are part of this story, but they are not really the focus of de Fremery's argument.

de Fremery's task is not "reinvigorating" bibliography, as this implies its moribundity (p. 1), but a reinvigoration of our concern for it, "a quiet revolution of attention" (p. 4). Bibliography serves an "infrastructural" role in scholarship requiring "maintenance" (p. 1). The other side of an infrastructure's foundational role for disciplines is that it can disappear beneath that which it supports. Thus, we have the need to reinvigorate attention: it is difficult to maintain what has "faded from view as naturalized structures of our everyday life and intellectual work" (p. 81). Further, he argues that bibliographical methods should remain at the center of an information ecosystem where "books" (or, preferably, "texts") increasingly take new forms: "bibliography is fundamental to documenting and understanding the social forms that [data] take as they are articulated by an ever-expanding variety of expressive sociotechnological modes" (p. 25).

The list—as a concept, but also as a textual object, as in the title and as a method across his discussion—marks the first element of this project. The enumeration of lists is always an interpretive or "selective" act (p. 30): "a tool for drawing material and conceptual boundaries that articulate objects and their contexts" (p. 3). The focus on enumeration covers Part I of the book, while bibliographical description, which "attempts to put what has been enumerated into relations, often in pursuit of a desire to inscribe what can be considered essential" (p. 31), is the concern of Part II (and de Fremery promises discussions of bibliography's other elements in a later volume.)

de Fremery uses bibliographical description (and the history of its uses) as a lens to understand machine learning and artificial intelligence. This is likely of interest to many librarians, but his discussion is distant from practical classroom considerations. In its concern with relationships, given that texts are "data given social shapes" (p. 53), "bibliographical description generates knowledge and can, through its recursive accounts, provide ways to know how knowledge has been produced" (p. 116). Through several examples, de Fremery argues that any description is, like enumeration, subject to the judgments of those accomplishing it and the affordances of their technologies. Bibliography as a practice can reveal these mediating

factors, he claims, as it “insistently attempts to account for the choices and contingencies that have shaped human knowledge as it has been presented” (pp. 126-127).

So what does this have to do with artificial intelligence? If bibliographical description can “account” for how knowledge is subject to judgments, it helps us see how it has come to be, “how we know what we know” (p. 129). The paradigm of “New Bibliography” used description to present “an ideal through the meticulous documentation of individual copies of texts considered similar enough to be put into a descriptive schema” (p. 163). de Fremery argues that these practitioners’ “inductive” methods work analogously to those of artificial intelligence and are therefore susceptible to the same critiques, namely that they focus only on “the minute material particulars of textual objects” (p. 168) detached from social context (p. 155).

Machine learning, he argues, is an automated process of bibliographical enumeration and description (p. 203). Deep learning, as a “recursive” process of such “learning,” can look a lot like New Bibliography when used to generate predictions of what is likely through pattern recognition, as the New Bibliographers sought to generate inductively an idealized, synthetic copy of an intended text by comparing all known copies (pp. 207-208). Among other issues, de Fremery highlights “how wrong our new bibliographical descriptions can be since they are so dependent on inductive methods” (p. 214). Returning to the critique of New Bibliography, particularly with the “counterfactual imagining” presented across the final chapter (p. 215), can help us lend a critical eye to the deployment of AI technologies, offering another reason to attend to bibliography’s history.

This book can be slow going for anyone unfamiliar with the scholarly discussions de Fremery engages with, as he often provides close readings of debates around the nature of bibliography. The discussion of the main theoretical players would likely benefit from further contextualization for understanding the full significance of these readings. Perhaps relatedly, the textual seams of including previously published work may be apparent—especially in the author’s restated aims—and signals to connections among particular points.

However, this repetition may be intentional as a form of building argument through drawing comparisons. With careful (recursive) reading, this book pushes us directly into the midst of these scholarly conversations. It is engaging and effective in its goal to have readers consider more closely those bibliographical aspects of the work of scholarship that can be easily overlooked.

Readers within librarianship may find de Fremery’s description of bibliography’s uneasy professional place interesting. He notes the in-betweenness of bibliography, its status as “marginal in the sociological sense of having many identities and affiliations” (p. 65). In being neither here nor there, bibliography can be viewed as mere preparation for the substantive work of any discipline. His statement that bibliography “sits between academic disciplines as means to disciplinary ends rather than the ends themselves,” as (p. 26) echoes the marginal librarian’s laments about “serving” research faculty as librarianship, too, “sits between academic disciplines.” However, bibliography receding to near invisibility at the foundation of other disciplines is not evidence of its unimportance. It’s quite the opposite. Perhaps librarianship too would benefit from its own “quiet revolution of attention.” — John C. Rendeiro, University of Connecticut Library

Everyday Evidence-Based Practice in Academic Libraries: Case Studies and Reflections, Claire Walker Wiley, Amanda B. Click, and Meggan Houlihan (eds.), Association of College & Research Libraries, 2023. 376p. Softcover, \$84.00. 9780838939857.