

brary literature) contribute some refreshing twists. For example, the belief that the traditional library was apolitical is exposed as an illusion. Similarly, concepts such as *democracy*, *freedom*, *equality*, and *neutrality* are shown to be contested concepts rather than timeless truths—a point made through an amusing comparison of the hacker's ethic of free access to all information and the only slightly less sweeping claims of the American Library Association. Apropos of a discussion of gender and librarianship (women do not fare well in the information age), the authors cite a study that "documents the way that men have always defined women's ideas as 'unoriginal,' thus legitimizing the exclusion of women from the upper ranks of the class system of the intellect."

The book concludes with a prolegomenon "to Library and Information Services in the Post-Industrial Era," in which the authors offer their own suggestions. This is the most disappointing part of an otherwise excellent book. Rather than actually taking positions, Harris and Hannah merely continue to set the stage for the formation of positions. They remind librarians that capitalism is dynamic by nature, and that change is inevitable. They advise us to acknowledge that the paradigm of library services "for the public good" is in eclipse—advice that may have already been superseded by the "politics of meaning" of the 1990s. Their call for a "commitment to arguing well" and a "struggle to establish a consensus" postpones commitment to actual choices. We will have to make those choices ourselves, of course, but at least we have been given a new way of thinking about them.—*Jean Alexander, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.*

Towner, Lawrence W. *Past Imperfect: Essays on History, Libraries, and the Humanities.* Ed. by Robert W. Karrow, Jr., and Alfred F. Young. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993. 298p. alk. paper, \$25 (ISBN 0-226-81042-9).

Lawrence "Bill" Towner was for twenty-four years the director of the

Newberry Library, one of the nation's most prestigious independent research libraries. This collection of Towner's writings, some previously unpublished, includes articles, essays, and speeches given on a variety of occasions. Published to mark his seventieth birthday, they are meant to define "the man and his vision"—to give us something of the flavor of the individual and to document his achievements as a historian, librarian, and spokesman for the humanities.

This volume is likely to be of greatest interest to librarians for an uncommon view of a visionary leader's personality and the library he shaped. The public Towner emerges as a man of great erudition, charm, coherence of vision, definite purpose, and adaptability, and he appears as someone capable of doing a great many different things—exemplary historical research, planning, administering, testifying before committees, cultivating mentors and donors—and using the appropriate rhetorical strategies for each occasion.

Towner's career as a historian was perhaps too brief to be truly distinguished, but his experience as a researcher had a distinct influence on some of the projects he undertook and promoted as a librarian. His interest in primary documents was reflected later when, as a librarian, he sponsored definitive editions of major American political figures and the microfilming of large bodies of documents. His convictions as a liberal historian of the progressive school and his interest in social contexts were evident in his own research, which focused on the behavior of marginal groups in colonial America—slaves, indentured servants, apprentices, and criminals. This interest in "democratizing" research is also apparent in his vigorous attempts to broaden access to the Newberry's beyond-the-usual clientele of university-affiliated scholars.

Towner's role as an articulate and forceful spokesman for the humanities also sheds an interesting light on his career as a librarian. This role is documented chiefly by his support of the National Endowment for the Human-

ties and in the development of its funding priorities. Towner's championship of the NEH enabled libraries such as the Newberry to have access to public funding for the first time.

Towner may have been a very good scholar but he also turned out to be an exceptional administrator. Perhaps the most interesting article in this collection is a 1971 planning report internal to the Newberry entitled "A Plan for the Newberry Library," in which he described his vision of the Newberry's role. Towner viewed the library as one of "several varieties of educational institutions—museums, colleges, universities, academies, institutes, and independent libraries—all sharing a common objective. That objective is the enlargement of mankind's knowledge and the sharing of that knowledge with as large an audience as is practical for the kind of institution it is." For Towner, the library was an educational institution among others, not a mass of materials passively awaiting the attention of scholars. He promoted the planned use of the Newberry by introducing the Newberry Library Seminar in the Humanities. Ultimately, by making the library the site of the Northwestern-Newberry editions of the writings of Herman Melville and the *Atlas of American History*, and by creating the Center for the History of Cartography, he insured that the "uncommon collection of collections" at the Newberry would be utilized by specialists, and he brought to the library a community of scholars, some for short residences, others for permanent stays.

His plans as outlined in 1971 were grand—no less than creating an Institute for Advanced Study in History and the Humanities. Though the institute did not come to be, the Newberry added other "centers," such as the Center for the History of the American Indian, the Center for Family and Community History Center, and the Center for Renaissance Studies. He developed an active publication program, found grants to bring in scholars, and broadened access to the collection. The Newberry instituted one of the first in-house preserva-

tion laboratories, in which many librarians received their training. The library's collection also grew through judicious sales and purchases, a complex process described in a fascinating essay, "Every Silver Lining Has a Cloud: The Recent Shaping of the Newberry Library's Collections."

How did Towner manage to pay for all this? The editors diplomatically removed from the 1971 planning document Towner's list of potential funding sources, so we are left to guess about where the money came from. In the early days, it seems to have come from wealthy donors. Foundations also supported the Newberry's projects. Where sources of funding did not exist, Towner helped create them. He was instrumental in the creation of the NEH, which later was a source of funding for many of the Newberry's projects. Perhaps to his own surprise, Bill Towner turned out to be as much of an entrepreneur as a historian.

The most recent essay in the collection dates from 1983, and, in a way, the library world Towner describes seems old-fashioned and remote. Though preservation and security problems preoccupied Towner, he never mentions automation and its attendant benefits and problems. His essays on the Newberry, however, are well worth reading, not so much for solutions to concrete problems as for the alternative vision of the library which they offer and for the verve and initiative below the surface of the controlled prose and the formulaic structure of some of the pieces.—*Eva Sartori, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln.*

Teaching Bibliographic Skills in History: A Sourcebook for Historians and Librarians. Ed. by Charles A. D'Aniello. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1993. 385p. \$65 (ISBN 0-313-25266-1).

The animating principle behind this work is to gather together material for the building of a bibliographic instruction course in history, but it is pitched to too many audiences and is written on too many different levels to be effective. It is also intended to bring together in one