

of context, the reduction to bits and pieces of data, as a qualitative loss. I think that Bowers is correct to see this phenomenon as something broader than the Internet, something that permeates and perhaps (as he claims) even serves as a root metaphor for our culture. Consider these chilling words: "By shaping consciousness and bodily experience to accept computer mediation as normal, the computer subculture (which is fast becoming the dominant culture) is also defining what is abnormal, deviant, and deficient." Which of us has not wondered whether libraries, librarians, and physical collections are not viewed by students today as abnormal, deviant, and deficient. It is no exaggeration to say that, at least at the campus where I work, students expect all information to be mediated by computers. The library accepts that fact and tries to provide services and collections electronically. In doing so, Bowers would say, we are accepting and endorsing a reductive view of knowledge and education.

Bowers writes in a style that is accessible to the nonspecialist, with quotations from authors on both sides of the debate and a decent bibliography and index. There is a great deal of repetition in the book, and I suspect that many of the ideas are recycled from earlier publications. At times, the focus wanders into areas of cultural studies, environmentalism, or educational theory that have little to do with computers per se. Computers are used as a handle on which to hang more general arguments. To give just one example (which may surprise librarians), Bowers attacks computer culture as exclusively visual and based on writing, traits that are also shared by books. And, of course, it is true that books are decontextualized forms of communication that eliminate the boundaries of time and space just as computers do.

The latter section of the book, entitled "Educational Consequences," begins with a spirited attack on the "industrial model" of university education that has recently emerged, which Bowers characterizes as "just-in-time learning for em-

ployees." He takes a swipe at the currently dominant educational paradigm (based on Piaget) which insists that students "construct their own knowledge." Examples from popular educational software packages such as Storybook Weaver, DynoPark Tycoon, Oregon Trail II, and the Sim series of simulation programs expose the cultural bias and pedagogical weakness of the technological approach to learning. Bowers concludes by explaining why computers should not replace teachers, offering several detailed scenarios for making teachers and students more aware of the cultural dimensions of software and computing. This was the least convincing aspect of the book for me. Bowers is better at attacking the assumptions and consequences of computer technologies than at developing solutions that are not overly simplistic or utopian. The value of the book lies in its ability to make a case for the prosecution. The defense can take care of itself.—*Jean M. Alexander, Carnegie Mellon University.*

Creating Web-Accessible Databases: Case Studies for Libraries, Museums, and Other Nonprofits. Ed. Julie M. Still. Medford, N.J.: Information Today, 2001. 184p. \$39.50 (ISBN 1-57387-104-4). LC 00-063283.

Have you ever wondered what it takes to publish a database on the Web? Does your library have a Web-publishing initiative? Are you aware of a resource unique to your institution (inside or outside the library) that deserves wider dissemination? Do you have an idea for a Web database but are not sure how or where to start? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you will likely find much of interest and value in this edited collection of case studies and general essays on Web publishing from the nonprofit perspective. Indeed, most of the chapters address issues directly relevant to academic libraries and librarians.

The prefatory matter includes a useful preface by the editor, Julie M. Still, a librarian at Rutgers University. Of special interest here is the list of questions she asked

the contributors to address in their essays. Having this list available makes it easier for the reader to make sense out of each chapter and facilitates the process of identifying common themes. The editor also indicates that she encouraged the contributors to "focus on the processes and people involved as opposed to the hardware, software, and other technical issues." Fortunately, the contributors took this advice to heart, thus avoiding the needless technical detail that often weakens collections of case studies in librarianship and related fields.

A brief introduction by the editor follows the prefatory matter. It does an excellent job of placing the volume in context and briefly summarizes the main points of each chapter. A more concerted attempt to identify themes that reappear throughout the volume would have made this introduction even more useful.

The volume begins in earnest with "Publishing Databases on the Web: A Major New Role for Librarians and Research Libraries," by Ronald C. Jantz. He describes in detail the Web-publishing initiative that began with the establishment in 1997 of the Scholarly Communication Center in Rutgers' Alexander Library. Although many important concepts are discussed, the key issue raised by Jantz is the importance of creating a reusable platform to support Web publishing no matter the content and nature of the specific database. Doing so ensures that the underlying processes and procedures need not be recreated for each project.

In "The Rutgers-Camden Database: A Case Study from Scrapbooks to the World Wide Web," Vibiana Bowman discusses a project associated with the initiative described in the first chapter. It involved the conversion of an index to the Rutgers-Camden database (a local events clipping file begun in the early 1970s) from ProCite bibliographic citation software to a Web database. Perhaps the most interesting point raised in this chapter is the importance of involving prospective users and other stakeholders in selecting existing resources for conversion to the Web.

"Women Writers and Online Books," jointly written by Mary Mark Ockerbloom and John Mark Ockerbloom, discusses two Web sites they began "in their spare time" in the early 1990s, the "On-Line Books Page," and "A Celebration of Women Writers." The former indexes online books of all types, and the latter indexes online books written by women together with links to related resources about the authors. This provides an interesting contrast to the previous chapters because the Ockerblooms continue to handle the project on their own, even down to writing and maintaining the customized software that keeps the site running. Even though they express pleasure with how things are going, they do express their concern that the demands of maintaining and updating the pages may soon overwhelm them, requiring them to seek assistance from other sources.

A similar project is described in "Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1830–1930: A History Web Site." In this well-written essay, Melissa Doak describes the development of a Web site providing guided access to a growing collection of primary source documents in women's history. The key issue she raises is the unexpectedly rapid growth of the project and the resulting demands for increased personnel.

In "History Databases at the Library of Virginia," Elizabeth Roderick documents the Web-publishing initiative she directs as manager of the Virginia Digital Library Program at the Library of Virginia. She summarizes each step in the publishing process, which focuses on digitizing archival resources, with an emphasis on staff and community involvement in the selection of projects. She also stresses the importance of working with automation vendors to create a platform of reusable applications to support the needs of such a large-scale program.

The following three chapters focus on commercial projects. In "Taking a Database to the Web: A Case Study," Vicky H. Speck of ABC-CLIO documents the pro-

cess of moving two major history databases, *Historical Abstracts* and *America: History and Life*, from CD-ROM to the Web. Perhaps the most valuable point raised by Speck is the importance of user input in the process. Academic libraries and librarians that become Web publishers would do well to follow a similar user-centered strategy.

In "Road to Papermoon," Brian-John Riggs describes how he set up his personal online bookstore, Papermoon Books, with the aid of ABE (Advanced Book Exchange), a Canadian online company that serves as an intermediary between sellers and purchasers of out-of-print titles. In "21st North Main, Inc.," Jeff Strandberg, a representative of the corporation by the same name, documents his company's business plan. Using ABE's database as a resource, "21st North Main" focuses specifically on the library market, acting as Web-based intermediary connecting libraries searching for out-of-print books with independent booksellers who carry the title. Some readers might find that this chapter comes close to free advertising, however, the notion of using commercial companies as intermediaries might well be useful in certain non-profit Web-publishing ventures.

The next two chapters explore Web publishing from a user's perspective. In "A View from the Other Side of the Reference Desk," Anne T. Keenan makes an impassioned plea for Web publishers to consider the needs of the typical public library patron. She emphasizes the importance of making database interfaces as simple as possible, with an emphasis on keyword searching. In "What Price Simplicity: A User-Centered Mediation," Laura Spencer expresses similar concerns from the perspective of the academic library. Her plea to Web publishers to create search interfaces that assist users in focusing their search is especially powerful.

The final chapters focus on two related issues, the importance of metadata and the use of standards in creating Web databases. In "Data and Metadata: An Overview of Organizations in Searchable

Full-Text Databases," Aurora Ioanid and Vibiana Bowman persuasively argue that controlled vocabulary still has an important role to play in searching full-text databases. The volume concludes with "XML: A Way Ahead for the Library Database?" In this chapter, Richard Gartner discusses the importance of standards, and his argument for XML as perhaps the best standard for Web publishing might well become required reading for any librarian interested in creating Web-accessible databases.

In conclusion, Julie M. Still and Information Today are to be commended for the high editing and production standards exhibited by this useful volume. One should note, however, that the latest print resource cited in any of the chapters is dated 1999, suggesting a rather long gestation period for the collection. Also, some readers may be uncomfortable with the personal, almost pleading nature of the writing in some chapters. But these are minor issues that do not seriously detract from the usefulness of this volume.—*Wade Kotter, Weber State University.*

Dilevko, Juris. *Unobtrusive Evaluation of Reference Service and Individual Responsibility: The Canadian Experience.* Westport, Conn.: Ablex (*Contemporary Studies in Information Management, Policies, and Services*), 2000. 220p. \$69.50 cloth (ISBN 1567505066), \$24.95 paper (1567505074). LC 99-058739.

Unobtrusive testing of reference service, wherein reference librarians are asked to answer questions by a researcher's "undercover" employees or proxies, is a technique that has been hotly contested in the library profession, especially since the controversial studies of Charles McClure and Peter Hernon in the 1980s. Those studies reported accuracy rates of barely more than 50 percent, which led to considerable debate about the efficacy and fairness of the methodology. Now, Juris Dilevko, a faculty member in Information Studies at the University of Toronto, has utilized unobtrusive testing to devastating effect in an examination of the inabil-