

texts and the phenomenon she uses as demonstration to “generally available facsimile sources,” without giving the reader direct reference to these in the text, makes it difficult, if not impossible, to follow the logic under which her exposition progresses. Her attempts to rectify this in the narrative is sometimes forced, frequently obscure, and always less satisfactory than a graphic example of the object under examination.

Further, the evident discontinuity among the various chapters leads to an inconsistent labeling of some of the major concepts with which she is working. *Stæfwritung* (a term obviously constructed by her) is a shorthand form of her central concept that is variously called in the text “the Anglo-Saxon Phonetic-Based Comprehensive Writing System,” “the Anglo-Saxon Comprehensive Writing System,” or more simply, “the Anglo-Saxon Phonetic Alphabet.”

The attempt to appeal to the general reader rather than to the specialist fails on several fronts. Paragraphs and pages read at a super-simplified level reminiscent of the text of *Cobblestone: The History Magazine for Young People* and merge into lengthy passages of such technical complexity that any reader will be almost guaranteed to get lost in the maze. The frequent use of *Alice in Wonderland* to open chapters, the somewhat bizarre analogies (modern writing systems are like jet airplanes?), and the redundancy throughout the text all serve to retard the progress of the narrative flow.

Moreover, there is a persistent thematic element coursing throughout the chapters that is disquieting. Early on, she establishes a framework of analysis in the deposition of an old order by a new one that almost invariably means linguistic change and always a change in the appearance of the script in which documents of varying degrees of authority are produced. Once would suffice, but here it is a refrain with continued reference to “The Winner’s Standard Operating Procedure” (always given the authority

of capitalization) throughout the text. Having an ideological peg upon which to hang one’s mortarboard is useful, but here the persistence of the phrase and its variants becomes almost obsessive.

Altman’s attempt to trace written Anglo-Saxon of the ninth century directly back to the Phoenician settlements in Cornwall in the pre-Roman era of British history is not compelling. Her assertion that the romance languages arose from misapplication of *stæfwritung* on the continent needs much more support to even make it comprehensible in the context of linguistic change. Both of these points need either documentation, which she does not provide given the stated purpose of the work, or more lucid explanation of the phenomena under examination to make them comprehensible or plausible to the average reader.

This is a work that undoubtedly needed a good editorial hand to make it succeed. There is an interesting thesis underlying the book, and the author apparently has a solid grasp of the nuances of evidence she presents in support of her points, but *Absent Voices* ultimately suffers from an absent editor. —Lee Shiflett, *The University of North Carolina at Greensboro*.

Eriksson-Backa, Kristina. *In Sickness and in Health: How Information and Knowledge Are Related to Health Behaviour.* Åbo: Åbo Akademis Förlag, 2003. 205p. 22 Euro (ISBN 951765152X; digital 9517651538). LC 2004-436241.

The information explosion of the late twentieth century has affected all individuals, perhaps most personally in the field of health. Technological innovations and biochemical discoveries have led to many new health care options, often costly and requiring extensive explanation to be adequately understood by the general public. Rising costs have precipitated changes in the health care system, leaving health care providers with less time and financial incentive for patient education. Meanwhile, the extension of life expectancy has forced patients, espe-

cially those with chronic conditions, to take responsibility for their own care or health management. In order to decide on quality of life and lifestyle issues, patients have begun to take a far more active role in their own health knowledge acquisition. Over the past decade, patient demand has fostered the creation of several databases, regular media segments, and countless Web sites designed specifically to impart health information to consumers of health care services. Health, communications, and information researchers have begun to study how consumers acquire, make sense of, and utilize information from these various sources.

Kristina Eriksson-Backa performed an extensive literature review on these issues as part of her doctoral dissertation for Åbo Akademi University in Finland. After receiving her master of science in information studies in 1999 and while a doctoral student at Åbo Akademi University Department of Information Studies (1999–2003), Ms. Eriksson-Backa was a member of the inter-Scandinavian team for the research project "Citizens, Health and the Changing Media Culture" (1999–2002).

Her doctoral thesis examines different sources of information that influence the general public's knowledge of health "facts" and the extent of their health knowledge. Although the empirical study itself concentrates on nutrition and diet information used by young and middle-aged adults in Finland, the impressive literature review (roughly half the volume) encompasses studies done throughout Europe, North America and, to a lesser extent Asia, on information on a far broader range of health issues.

The book opens with definitions and theories of health and knowledge, including a review of the schema theory of knowledge acquisition and development. This is followed by a review of research on the correlation between knowledge of health information and actual health behavior and of health information needs and various media through which people receive health information.

Graduate students in health promotion, health education, public health, and communications are the most likely audience to value this book's concise annotations in this extensive literature review. However, these and other readers may feel that some word choices and punctuation make comprehension difficult, and behavioral scientists are the most likely to recognize weaknesses in the empirical study that follows. The author conducted all interviews herself but does not indicate if a script was used to minimize interviewer cues. She notes that changes in terminology may have occurred when she (rather than the interviewee) wrote down the answers to the questionnaire. She evaluated the second part of the interview—subjects relating the advice they would give to someone about how to live a healthy day—on the basis of the amount of detail included but did not indicate whether subjects were aware of this criterion or whether she had controlled for verbose versus concise communication styles, leading this reader to question the validity of any conclusions drawn on the relation between knowledge held and answer given. Cluster analyses resulted in three groups of eight to twenty-two subjects, which the author admits is small for reliable generalizations. Statistics appear as composite scores on the issue of positive/negative attitudes toward the various sources of health information and excerpts from the transcripts accompany the analysis. Inclusion of more raw or individual data on other questions and the inclusion of at least one full transcript may have strengthened reader confidence in the author's interpretation of the results. Neither qualitative nor quantitative methodology is described in sufficient detail for the study to be replicated, though the appendices include the subject recruitment notice and the full text in both English and Swedish of the survey instrument itself.

The discussion of the study's results concentrates on sources of information, one of the four research questions the

study proposed to investigate. Eriksson-Backa admits that her study does not fit well with theories on the relationship between information source and knowledge level, perhaps causing her to concentrate on possible demographic explanations instead.

The strengths of this volume are its logical organization of chapters, impressive literature review and bibliography, and the inclusion of the complete questionnaire. Despite weaknesses in the flow of the English text and the lack of detailed description of methodologies used in the empirical study and their relation to its philosophical underpinnings, this book could serve as an excellent bibliographic source for researchers in the field of health information and its relation to preferred media and health behavior. — *Nancy Schaefer, University of Florida.*

Digital Media Revisited: Theoretical and Conceptual Innovation in Digital Domains. Eds. Gunnar Liestol, Andrew Morrison, and Terje Rasmussen. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Pr., 2003. 554p. alk. paper, paper \$24.95 (ISBN 0262621924); cloth \$45 (ISBN 0262122561). LC 2002-35064.

Digital media now permeate our lives, from bank teller machines to digital art to online classrooms. Much of the first wave of academic investigation and thought about the impact of these increasingly pervasive new technologies was limited to specific academic applications. Art critics who turned their attention to digital media creations quite naturally drew on the theories and vocabulary of their own field. Sociologists studying online communities did the same, and so did librarians, literary theorists, ethicists, and others, each operating within his or her own scholarly paradigm. Perhaps the most useful and enlightening aspect of *Digital Media Revisited* is the editors' attempt to bring thinkers from a wide range of theoretical traditions together in one volume. The nature of this work invites the reader to break academic boundaries,

to link and weave together the insight of multiple thinkers and their academic disciplines. This is especially appropriate for a work that investigates media that often have their greatest impact due to an interactive, interwoven, and hypertextual nature.

The work's nineteen essays are informed by literary theory, semiotics, philosophy, aesthetics, ethics, media studies, sociology, and education. They are arranged in four sections: "Education and Interdisciplinarity," "Design and Aesthetics," "Rhetoric and Interpretation," and "Social Theory and Ethics." Within these general subject areas, authors look at a wide-ranging set of issues from Jay David Bolter's investigation into the divide between the media of theory and the media of practice in the new media studies ("What we need is a hybrid, a fusion of the critical stance of cultural theory with the constructive attitude of the visual designer") to Mark Poster's questioning of the relationship between real-life encounters and mediated or virtual interactions ("Can we apply to acts that are distanced by information machines the same norms, value judgments, and moral and ethical criteria that we use in evaluating face-to-face speech acts?"). Found between are essays that explore theatricality and performance in multi-user dungeons (MUDS), subjectivity and agency in the use of new technologies by the disabled, and the representation of women in gaming culture, among others.

Particularly noteworthy are the essays, "The Paradigm Is More Important Than the Purchase" and "Computer Games and the Ludic Structure of Interpretation." The former is by George P. Landow, the influential author of several highly cited and important works on hypertext theory. Landow notes how developers of new media often view their creations as simply versions of old media and thus do not make use of their full potential (e.g., museum Web sites become simply online print catalogs, lacking interactive and multimedia components that are