

Book Reviews



Jeannette Woodward. *The Transformed Library: E-books, Expertise, and Evolution.* Chicago: ALA Editions, America Library Association, 2013. 131p. ISBN: 978-0-8389-1164-8. LCCN: 2012-23767.

I feel ambivalent about this book. On the one hand, I think it worthwhile to read Woodward's ruminations, as a seasoned librarian—she was previously a senior library administrator at Wayne State University, then director of the Fremont County Library System in Wyoming. On the other, I frequently found that the pacing and style of this book interfered with its purpose. Nevertheless, I think it valuable in providing one prominent librarian's snapshot of the current state of the profession, which includes public, academic, and school librarianship.

The chapter headings themselves give a nice indication of the content and flow of the book: "Gutenberg Meets Kindle: The Arrival of Digital Books"; "Libraries vs. E-Publishers: The Library's Point of View"; "The Age of High Anxiety: Threats That Fuel Library Nightmares"; "The Library in Cyberspace"; "Will the Coffee Shop Save Us? The Library as Place"; "Library Careers That Won't Go Away"; "Survival Strategies for Public Libraries"; "Survival Strategies for Academic Libraries"; and "Survival Strategies for School Libraries."

Of these, I thought the chapter on library as place was particularly strong, as were the chapters dealing with public libraries. It is clear that Woodward has had to wrestle with boards of trustees, local government, harrowing budgetary constraints, and even the mundane though centrally important issues of facilities management and maintenance. Her wisdom in these matters shines forth.

The weakest chapters, in my opinion, were the ones having to do with academic libraries. Woodward does not cover current and important issues—for

instance, there is no mention of the open access movement or data curation, and only passing mention of Geographic Information Systems (GIS). These are as important now as was, say, the movement to develop and implement institutional repositories, which began several years ago.

One objectionable trope of the book is that libraries tend to be "stodgy." In the past six months I've had the pleasure not only of working in a vibrant academic research library—a library that is anything but stodgy—but also of visiting, sitting, and reading in wonderful public library branches in Adams County, Pennsylvania, Worcester County, Maryland, and my home library system in Baltimore County, Maryland. My sense is that each of these public library systems is flourishing. Baltimore County, in fact, recently opened the largest branch in its entire history! Moreover, Woodward urges the library world to better use social media, but I often attend the joint Maryland Library Association/Delaware Library Association's annual conference, and I am astounded and impressed by what the public libraries in my region are doing with social media. And what other service profession is using these technologies to such good effect?

Stasis and flow, being and becoming, transformed and transforming—it's difficult to examine our profession in the midst of a protean evolution (witness the publishing industry's present throes) and accurately report on progress. I do admire Woodward's attempt to do so in this brief book, and think it is a worthwhile and timely read for those interested in taking the current pulse of the library world.—Mark Cyzyk, Johns Hopkins University.