

Book Reviews



Sidney E. Berger. *Rare Books and Special Collections*. Chicago: Neal-Schuman, an imprint of the American Library Association, 2014. 537p. \$129.00 (ISBN 978-55570-964-8). LC 2014-006055.

The scope of Sidney E. Berger's *Rare Books and Special Collections* occupies the paradoxical point between expansive and exhaustive, which is to say Berger strives to provide what he feels has been sorely lacking in the field—a textbook that provides a general overview of all aspects of special collections librarianship—while constantly reminding his readers that his volume will not be, *cannot be*, comprehensive on any aspect of that field.

Berger is well qualified to bring together the many issues concerning rare books and special collections. Currently the director of the Phillips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum, Berger has years of rare books and special collections librarianship under his belt (Head of Special Collections and University Archivist at the University of California, Riverside, and Director for the California Center for the Book) as well as vast experience teaching courses (History of the Book, Rare Book and Special Collections Librarianship, to name just two). He is currently an adjunct professor at both Simmons College and the University of Illinois, Champaign/Urbana, and cites his frustration over having to search out and evaluate a myriad of works for his students as the motivation for publishing this book.

With the stated goal to "...gather in a single volume the essential information that practitioners in the rare book field should have," Berger sets a lofty goal for himself. The work is divided into fourteen chapters, seven appendixes, and an index. The ordering of the chapters is not always intuitive; the advanced "Running a Rare Book Department," for example, is the second chapter, coming well before other topics more fundamental to students looking for an introduction to rare books (for example, chapter 4: "The Physical Materials of the Collection"). If one uses this work as a reference book or is merely assigning select chapters for a course, the order matters significantly less. The structure is such that readers can jump in and out as needed. Each chapter is divided into short sections (with side notes offering anecdotes from the field and Berger's own career) and ends with notes and, occasionally, a bibliography.

The meat of the chapters does provide a good overview of the topics, and the writing is clear and concise. The notes and bibliographies at the end of each chapter are worth just as much as the chapter content; the bibliographies at the end of chapters 4 and 6, in particular, are a fantastic resource for students and teachers alike, and readers will benefit from the years Berger spent searching out and evaluating these resources. Similarly, the appendixes are a treasure trove of practical material. The appendix "Department Forms," for example, could be equally useful to students and seasoned librarians. Educators teaching courses on the history of the book or the book as physical object will be happy with the illustrations in chapter 4, "The Physical Materials of the Collection."

Finally, a word must be given to Berger's side notes, which are sprinkled throughout, and vary from a few sentences to a few paragraphs. The content ranges from personal (Berger discusses his sentiments after selling some of his own rare books to support his son's education) to informative (we learn the meaning of "first thus" and its applications in the booksellers vocabulary). They include historical footnotes (F.O. Matthiessen's ill-fated bibliographical selection of Melville's *White Jacket*) as well as illustrations of the scandal that can arise in the field (for instance, an archival collection

that uncovers a prominent professor's infidelity). Berger has decades of experience, and his notes do much to bring what students may view as dry material into the real world; they are often amusing and always interesting.

For all its humble claims, this work attempts to be the first definitive work on the subject of rare books and special collections librarianship, and it largely succeeds. The information within it can be found quickly, and those providing reference services at libraries supporting an MLIS program will benefit from the extensive listing of additional resources. The implication of this work could be the standardization of education across the special collections librarianship field. Berger's work provides a strong framework for teaching, and a thorough reading of it—if ever a student is compelled to read it from cover to cover—would indeed provide the knowledge base to make "... anyone who works with rare books able to speak with authority, using the accepted vocabulary, and not perpetuate the errors that have been canonized over the centuries." As an introduction and jumping-off point, this work fills a vacuum in the special collections library canon; but, in a field that expands and evolves constantly, it remains to be seen how long a work like this can go without needing a revised edition. *Rare Books and Special Collections* will be a valuable resource for special collections librarians and students hoping to join their ranks. —Dana E. Hart, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Elsie A. Rogers Halliday Okobi. *Library Services for Adults in the 21st Century*. Santa Barbara: Libraries Unlimited, 2014. 242p. \$60.00 (ISBN 978-1-59158-705-7).

Elsie A. Rogers Halliday Okobi presents a thorough introduction for how libraries can meet the needs of individuals over the age of eighteen in *Library Services for Adults in the 21st Century*. As a member of the teaching faculty at Southern Connecticut State University's Department of Information and Library Science, Okobi has written an overview that not only does covers important basics, it also points readers toward other current resources for further study. Guest author Professor Mary E. Brown, also of Southern Connecticut State University, contributes an excellent chapter on assessment of services.

Okobi's book is divided in four sections, beginning with three chapters on the need for library services to adults, and the history and development of these types of services and programming. Most of this historical summary reflects on public library services to adults since the beginning of the American Library Association, and the author neatly summarizes the ALA committees, divisions, and projects that have reflected on or contributed to this aspect of library work. While Okobi is correct to point out that other private libraries, especially prior to the establishment of the ALA, functioned mainly as social clubs for adults, it would have been interesting in this section to reflect on how organizations such as Mechanics' Institutes' libraries across the United States originated to fill a gap in adult education for the general public through libraries. Many of these institutions were later absorbed by public library systems, and their impact on the development of library services for adults should not be ignored.

Following this introductory section, the second major part of this volume looks at how to plan for and assess this type of library service. Okobi does an excellent job of highlighting the importance of community analysis and assessment, examining the history of community assessment in public libraries and contextualizing the development of various assessment methods. While this book is not advertised as a "how to" manual for assessment, the thorough reflection on why, when, and how to conduct community assessment makes it an excellent point of reference.

Following this, Professor Mary E. Brown's chapter on assessment of existing adult services explains the need to develop objectives for library services and, following this, to assess services against these objectives. Brown provides excellent guidelines on how