

Book Reviews

Norm Medeiros

Library 2020: Today's Leading Visionaries Describe Tomorrow's Library. Edited by Joseph Janes. Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow, 2013. 161 p. \$45.00 paperback (ISBN: 978-0-8108-8714-5).

Librarians, despite the inherently conservative nature of their role in the preservation of knowledge, spend a considerable amount of time looking forward. Joseph Janes, chair of the University of Washington's Information School and longtime *American Libraries* columnist, has brought together a variety of thinkers to answer the question, "The library in 2020 will be ____." Participants were selected by Janes from among his friends and "some people [he] admire[s] a great deal" (v). The year 2020 was selected as being "far enough out that some exciting things might well have happened, but not so far out as to have to resort to shiny-jump suit and hovercar predictions left over from 1965 about 2000" (v). The selections are organized into six sections along thematic lines. These sections include "Stuff," "People," "Community," "Place," "Leadership and Vision," and Janes's own thoughts in a section titled "My Turn." Most of the selections blur these boundaries, but their placement accurately reflects the main thrust of each essay.

The Annoyed Librarian opens the discussion with a dystopian image of a library world where collections are no longer available to lend. She foresees a future where e-book, video, and music licensing becomes so restrictive that distribution of these items is impossible. Kristin Fontichiaro follows by suggesting that "libraries can no longer count on describing themselves as the repositories for stuff" (7). She goes on to describe an even more vibrant future in 2020 in which libraries are

"makerspaces" where community members come together to learn from each other and create. The final two essays in this section echo these themes as Elisabeth Jones describes the effect of large-scale book digitization projects on the library's role as book warehouse and the changing role of librarians within this regard. Clifford Lynch reminds readers of potential barriers to access that these changes might entail as libraries shift to greater licensed and fewer owned collections.

The second section deals with the most important resource in any library: people. Sarah Houghton suggests a future where libraries are staffed and managed by technologically sophisticated individuals whom she describes as "benign geek librarian overlords" (35). In his essay, Stephen Abram posits that "the library in 2020 will be *everywhere*" (41). He goes on to describe the changing roles of librarians as they spend more time delivering programs and providing individual assistance to patrons. He too emphasizes that the days of the library as book repository are at an end. Courtney Greene considers a wide range of possibilities, but comes back to what she considers "the enduring value of our work," which lies in "serving and supporting our communities" (53) regardless of how things might change technologically. Like Abram, Marie Radford sees the library in 2020 as being accessible from anywhere via mobile apps of increasing sophistication, and like Houghton she sees a need for librarians to become technological leaders. James Rosenzweig closes the section by describing his vision of the library as "an information base camp" and librarians as "guides" (63).

The essayists discussing the library of 2020 within the context of community describe the library as "essential for the success of its community" (77), "the vibrant hub of its community" (99), "better than ever" (95), and even "your best friend" (71). This optimism by no means implies that the library of 2020 will remain unchanged from today. To retain their central role in the community, libraries of all types will not only have to become focused on community engagement and remain responsive to the needs of their patrons, but will need to serve as technological change agents.

In discussing the concept of library as place, the essayists feel that physical buildings will remain or grow in importance, but that library services will need to exist beyond these narrow confines. As patrons obtain mobile devices and more resources become accessible through them, libraries will need to provide services wherever and whenever patrons desire. Bill Ptacek describes the library in 2020 as being "a concept more than a place" (117). As discussed in the previous sections, the library will be less a storehouse of materials and more a location where the community gathers.

The final major section of the book discusses the leadership and vision that will be needed to transform the libraries of today into the libraries of 2020. Josie Barnes Parker emphasizes the importance of "fiscal oversight" and "realistic projections" (129) in building the kind of future that the other essayists envision. Mary Ann Mavrinac states that before progress can be made libraries must recognize the need to change, and must be proactive in moving the library forward. As a needed counterpoint, Daniel Chudnov describes a

different, darker future where the race to reinvent libraries has left them as a poor second choice in their emerging role of digital content provider, while adversely affecting their capacity to provide traditional analog services. In the book's final essay, Janes reminds readers that libraries are "not [solely] playing a short-term game" (153). He suggests that libraries need to continue justifying to their communities that the services they provide are important, and that libraries are well equipped to provide them.

Most of the essays described above are positive and hopeful, though a few see more challenges and barriers ahead than opportunities. A couple even caution about making changes too quickly in response to technological advances, echoing in some ways Nicholson Baker's reflections on the rush to microfilm newspaper and other collections described in his book, *Double Fold*. Given that libraries are custodians of the world's cultural and intellectual heritage, and recognizing that decisions are sometimes irreversible, these cautions should be at the forefront for librarians. Nonetheless, the one thing that each of the essayists and Professor Janes agree on is that libraries are in a time of great change, and that librarians need to adapt quickly to continue meeting patron needs and professional responsibilities for the treasures they hold in trust.—*John E. Adkins (johnadkins@ucwv.edu), University of Charleston, Charleston, West Virginia*

The E-book Revolution: A Primer for Librarians on the Front Lines.

By Kate Sheehan. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2013. 146 p. \$50 paperback (ISBN: 978-1-61069-183-3).

The e-book Revolution: A Primer for Librarians on the Front Lines provides a 360-degree panorama of the ever-changing e-book landscape. Its author, Kate Sheehan, composes a section for each of "the big picture issues around e-books," starting with

those related to hardware, formats, distribution, and access, then addressing concerns directly related to libraries, like pricing and lending (xi). The final part of the book considers the position of libraries in the e-book landscape and the unique horizon ahead for them. Although the text's primary focus is to help public librarians grasp the many issues surrounding e-books, the chapters titled "Readers," "Problem Solvers," and "Scenarios for the Future" paint an inspiring portrait of the library's role in the digital age and are worth reading for anyone interested in the future of librarianship.

In the opening paragraphs, Sheehan addresses the million-dollar question: Will e-books replace print texts? She uses an apt comparison with radio and television to show e-books are not completely replacing print. Part of the reason for the limited influence of e-books, Sheehan points out, is the hardware and format wars. Much of chapter 1 provides baseline information about various e-reader devices and their many proprietary software formats. As Sheehan insinuates, a large problem in the industry, ironically, is that the universal format, EPUB, plays on every reading device except the most popular, Amazon's Kindle (7).

Chapter 2, cleverly titled "The Rules of the Road," begins the text's attempt to navigate readers through the winding roads of e-book ownership, distribution, and publishing. Here Sheehan quickly looks at digital rights management, copyright, and the first-sale doctrine and their effect on traditional library lending practices. Just as the slow-moving vehicle sign is unfamiliar to a city driver, e-book acquisition is new to libraries. According to Sheehan, "The current e-book market requires us not only to purchase books that aren't objects, but to purchase books we may not own" (23). The sections that follow present an even more confusing image for libraries, one that makes determining who reads, sells, and purchases e-books

akin to negotiating a four-way stop when all cars arrive simultaneously. Chapter 3 examines data about e-book reader habits from Pew's *Internet & American Life Project* and briefly delves into what e-book vendors sell to public, academic, and school libraries. Chapter 4 explores the "big six" publishers—HarperCollins, Penguin, Macmillan, Random House, Simon and Schuster, and Hachette—their history with e-books, whether they supply to libraries, and how they price their digital editions.

Midway through the book, Sheehan turns the discussion from the physical environment of e-books to their effect on the traditional book ecosystem. Libraries are a main player in this ecosystem, and Sheehan spends quite a bit of time describing this exceptional and difficult position. According to Sheehan, "Libraries are caught between patron expectations, vendor restrictions, and publishers' demands" (75). Chapter 5 investigates the complex relationship libraries have with vendors. When it comes to promoting discoverability, libraries and e-book vendors are allies; but advocating for interlibrary loan privileges and against egregious pricing models have put libraries at odds with these same vendors. Chapter 6 touches on the demands e-books place on public, academic, and school libraries, and chapter 7 explores how accessibility issues tied to electronic texts are affecting libraries' relationships with readers.

In the book's final sections, Sheehan shifts to solutions and looks toward the future. Here she does an excellent job reporting innovative e-book initiatives and delivering a rousing perspective on changes in librarianship. Chapter 8 briefly covers several encouraging stories, like Douglas County Libraries' homegrown e-book program, Ann Arbor District Library's local history digital archive, and Gluejar's Kickstarter-like platform to deliver open access e-books chosen and