Book Reviews

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Slide Collection Management in Libraries and Information Units. Glyn Sutcliffe. Aldershot, Hampshire, England, and Brookfield, Vt.: Gower, 1995. 219p. $74.95 (ISBN 0-56607-580-6). LC 94-22678.

This book is an important, if not quirky, addition to the meager literature of slide librarianship. The author takes a broadly inclusive view of an oft-ignored specialization and gives it resonance. Although the title suggests a work that aims to be a definitive manual of practice, in fact Sutcliffe has produced something different— a discourse, an essay on the state of the art, covering its literature and practices across a variety of subject fields. He also discusses the possible impact of imaging technologies on pictorial information. Not what it at first appears to be, this book is a thoughtful and important, albeit unusual, addition to the field.

With the exception of the important and regular output of the two periodicals of the Visual Resources Association, *Visual Resources, an International Journal of Documentation* and *VRA Bulletin*, the slide librarians' professional bookshelf demands little space. The literature of slide collection management is, as Sutcliffe notes, "incomplete and fragmented" (p. 34). (Throughout this review I use the terms "slide collection management" and "slide librarianship" interchangeably. The former and more inclusive term covers the literature of slide management regardless of professional training). That literature, in addition to falling outside of mainstream librarianship, is largely out of date, predating image databases, networked images, and the World Wide Web.

There are just thirty-two monographs with the subject heading "Libraries— Special collections—Slides" in the OCLC Online Computer Library Center Inc.'s FirstSearch database. Ranging in date from 1967 to 1995, these monographs include second editions and duplicate records, and consist primarily of how-to manuals and spiral-bound pamphlets, all based on first-hand experience or surveys of practice.

Slide librarians are generally aware years in advance of forthcoming books in their field. Betty Jo Irvine's standard text, *Slide Libraries*, galvanized the community of academic slide librarians and slide curators during the late 1960s, and Nancy Schuller's lengthy manual, *Management for Visual Resources Collections*, was long awaited in the mid-1980s.

Sutcliffe's book comes to us from a very different impetus. Sutcliffe is the audiovisual librarian at the Learning Resources Center, Calderdale College, Halifax, U.K., where the neglected slide sets and slide/tape programs led him to concentrate on medical slide management for his library degree ("The Management and Exploitation of Photographic Slide Collections in University Teaching Hospitals." M.Phil. thesis, Aberystwyth, University of Wales, 1989). Sutcliffe's goal is to make a "coordinating contribution in a fragmented area of information work which is likely to benefit from a sharper profile and . . . pooling of the expertise which exists in many different but loosely related areas" (p. 21). He brings together the literature of the collections management practices of the established visual arts and medical illustration communities, finding little published literature on practices in public libraries, museums, and photographic rights and reproduction houses. He looks at the field with a broad

perspective and a critical eye, and includes the "true" slide library, smaller and less-structured slide collections, as well as slide sets and slide/tape programs in media centers.

Given the underdeveloped literature of this field, the breadth of his goals, the variety of institutions and academic fields with slide collections, the ongoing disagreement over the proper training for slide professionals, the marginalization of the specialization, and the rapidity of technological changes in imaging capabilities, it is no wonder that Sutcliffe's book is both fascinating and uneven. Where Sutcliffe succeeds admirably is in his placement of a multitude of factors in a historical context, bringing these into the present, and making them intelligible and interesting. This is true even when he goes too far in one direction or not enough in another: for instance, his full discussion of visual orientation contrasts with the brevity of his discussion on the complex issue of copyright of images, when one wishes those priorities had been reversed. This suggests that the book is the product not of practice, but of thought; not the slide librarian but the armchair scholar. For example, in his introductory chapter, "Background and Trends in Slide Collection Management," he covers the slide as a library item, the interrelationship of the slide with other picture-making technologies, preconceptions about slides by traditional librarians, the problems with integrating slides with other audiovisual materials in media centers, detrimental packaging of slide sets to look like books, and the value of the "unitary" slide library over slide/tape programs and slide sets.

> In a pure sense the true slide library is that which has been referred to by one primary source as made up of "unitary images". This distinction is important since . . . whereas the tape/slide sequence and the slide set can be successfully integrated in conventional library shelving arrangements the collection of single images by its very nature requires segregated treatment. Clearly, almost any body of slides can be grouped into subsections to form sets in fixed sequences and it is a crucial

management decision to choose to do this or to make the basic unit of the collection the single image. This has a fundamental effect on the amount of processing work which is required in identifying, labeling, classifying, cataloguing and indexing. There is no escape from the fact that the collection of unitary images requires considerably more labour to establish, administer and maintain than does a collection of slide sets, but it is also inescapable that such work is an absolute necessity to fulfill the specific needs that such a collection is constructed to meet (p. 26).

In his second chapter, "The Literature of Slide Collection Management," he examines the literature from several different historical perspectives. Discussing issues such as the marginalization of slide librarians and divisions within the field itself between slide librarians and slide curators (professional managers not trained as librarians), Sutcliffe's long British sentences read almost as asides, but are right on mark.

> Latterly a conscious shift in library education has been made away from the concept of the librarian being a book manager towards being an information manager. This has been reflected strongly in the content of degree courses offered and has extended to the renaming of university departments to emphasize information management rather than traditional librarianship. It can no longer be in doubt that pictorial information in all its forms is firmly within the ambit of modern librarianship or professional information work and that the continuing integration of text and illustrations, in image databases for example, is likely to confirm and consolidate this. It was not until the late 1980s though, that this trend reached an openly and fully acknowledged conclusion (p. 48).

Where most slide management literature surveys arrange the literature according to practice (copyright, production, physical facilities, etc.), Sutcliffe's historical approach divides the literature into three periods based on developments in computing technology: from the earliest mention of slides in the seventeenth century up to 1983, 1983–1989, and 1989 to date.

Sutcliffe also positions the literature in terms of the debates over professional training, acknowledging the strengths that both slide librarians and slide curators have brought to the field, and the impact that this division has had on the literature.

However, other chapters are less successful, such as "The Technical Preparation of Slides as Stock Items" and "Commercially Available Slide Management and Retrieval Packages." His chapter "Slide Retrieval" falls somewhere between the practical and the analytical, with an awkward result. Here he tackles the still contentious debate over whether to classify or not, curiously but sensibly combining it with a prosaic discussion of slide storage systems.

Sutcliffe admits to seeing some value in adapting book classification schemes for slides, at first a shocking confession. However, his view makes more sense after reading the chapter on "Medical Slide Collections," where the practice is common. (It is not common in art and architecture collections in the United States.) Because Sutcliffe takes an integrated approach to issues in slide management throughout the book, implications of imaging technologies are addressed throughout and are not confined to his chapter "Optical Disc Systems and the Slide."

Sutcliffe's book would have benefited by any one of several factors. His description of slide storage systems is one of the areas in which British practice differs from American, and the same is true in the areas of copyright and preference for analog technology. These could have been compared explicitly and more fully. Indeed, comparison of British and American practice throughout the book would have broadened his information base. The appendices are entirely British and would have benefited from American equivalents, as well as an additional month's worth of concentrated information gathering to bring them fully up to date. Products like Kodak's Picture Exchange software and Digital Collections, Inc.'s EmbARK, the successor to AXS Art Access image database software, are serious

omissions. Footnoting could have been more specific, pointing more often to exact pages or authors. As a state-of-the-art review, either an annotated bibliography or a classified bibliography would have been more useful than one long alphabetical listing. Nevertheless, the book contains a wealth of factual information not readily found elsewhere, and it achieved its goals. It made for productive, stimulating, and provocative reading, and makes a valuable contribution to the literature of the field.—*By Maryly Snow, Architecture Slide Library, University of California, Berkeley.*

WORKS CITED

Irvine, Betty Jo. 1979. *Slide libraries : A guide for academic institutions, museums, and special collections.* 2d ed. Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited.

Schuller, Nancy S. 1989. *Management for visual resources collections.* 2d ed. Englewood, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited.

Collection Management and Development: Issues in an Electronic Era. Proceedings of the Advanced Collection Management and Development Institute, 1993. Ed. Peggy Johnson and Bonnie MacEwan. ALCTS Papers on Library Technical Services and Collections, no. 5. Chicago: ALA, 1994. 148p. $24 (ISBN 0-8389-3347-1). LC 94-19300.

Collection Management and Development: Issues in an Electronic Era contains the papers given at the first Advanced Collection Management and Development Institute in Chicago in 1993. The institute grew out of a series of successful regional institutes on the basics of collection development that have been a popular Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS) continuing education initiative since the first offering in 1981 in Stanford, California. The book is not for beginners because it assumes a fundamental knowledge of collection development. For accuracy in title keyword indexing, the phrase "Academic Research Libraries" should have appeared somewhere because each of the speakers