

Book Reviews

Edward Swanson

Community, Collaboration, and Collections: The Writings of Ross Atkinson. Eds. Robert Alan and Bonnie MacEwan. Chicago: Association for Library Collections & Technical Services, 2005. 307p. \$75 (\$67.50 ALA members) paper (ISBN 0-8389-8361-8).

When Ross Atkinson, Cornell University's associate university librarian for collections, agreed to present the keynote address for the 2003 Tennessee Library Association annual conference, I proposed that he speak on themes from his article, "Contingency and Contradiction: The Place(s) of the Library at the Dawn of the New Millennium."¹ My library colleagues had used the piece to envision our evolving library services, so the invitation was partly selfish, as I wanted the opportunity to explore the themes of the piece more thoroughly with the author. Because "Contingency and Contradiction" promoted collaboration among various types of libraries, the context was highly relevant for the multitype audience at a state library conference. However, Ross had moved on in his thinking, and presented, as he often did, a thoughtful and provocative keynote, "Trust and Transversality: The Future of Information Services," that was subsequently published as "Transversality and the Role of the Library as Fair Witness."² The article appeared at about the same time as *Community, Collaboration, and Collections*, a compilation of twenty-five publications by a librarian whose work is among the most challenging, inspiring, and provocative in the scholarly writing of our profession.

The contents provide both narrative and synthesis of the significant collection development and management issues of the past two decades, accentuating the transition from a print world to today's hybrid print-electronic environment that presages a more digital future. While each item in *Community, Collaboration, and Collections* stands alone, the entire work could serve as a theoretical and topical complement to Peggy Johnson's *Fundamentals of Collection Development & Management* or G. Edward Evans's *Developing Library and Information Center Collections* as textbooks.³ For readers seeking in-depth synthesis of contemporary collection development issues, Atkinson's work is grounded in a profound service ethic committed to connecting people and information.

The vivid introduction by Sarah Thomas, Carl A. Kroch university librarian at Cornell, movingly illuminates Atkinson's significance as a contemporary visionary with a gift for creative thinking and clarity of expression. From his first library-related article in 1984, to the release of *Community, Collaboration, and Collections* in 2005,

Atkinson published more than two dozen substantive articles and other works. He won the 1985 RTSD Blackwell North America/Resources Section Scholarship Award for "The Citation as Intertext: Towards a Theory of the Selection Process," the article that Thomas observes, "launched his career as one of the profession's most original thinkers" (vii). Subsequent publications won awards in 1992, 1993, and 1999. In April 2003, Atkinson appeared on the cover of *College & Research Libraries News* as the recipient of ACRL's Academic/Research Librarian of the Year. Thomas's introduction captures Atkinson's personal style and brilliant mind. Drawing parallels between his passion for running and the disciplined intensity of his communications style, she describes his work as "characterized by tight definition, linguistic precision, and a combination of abstract reasoning that is frequently reduced to a simple predictive statement or recommendation" (vii). Only a few months after the appearance of *Community, Collaboration, and Collections*, on March 8, 2006, Thomas made the sad announcement of Ross Atkinson's death. As the information community mourns Ross's death, this book is a timely celebration of his momentous impact on the profession.

Editors Robert Alan and Bonnie MacEwan, prominent contributors to the collection development and acquisitions literature, acknowledge the genesis of the work as a way to honor Ross Atkinson for his brilliant and original contributions to librarianship. Noting that his work and ideas have shaped careers, they present, in reverse chronological order, eighteen journal articles, four book chapters, a seminar paper, a literature review, and a guest editorial published from 1984 through 2003. Each publication constitutes a chapter. The book title echoes Sarah Thomas' observation about Ross Atkinson, "He often exhorts practitioners to higher ideals of community, collaboration, and, of course, collections" (vii). Several articles in the collection acknowledge an earlier paper that Atkinson presented at a conference, reflecting his penchant for testing ideas before an audience as a step in crafting a publication.

A nearly complete Atkinson bibliography with full text in a single, convenient package, the hefty 307-page paperback is approximately letter-sized. Visually, the bottom margin is a bit skimpy, and the font size, while readable, leans toward smallish. However, the clarity of the type on the page is of excellent quality, and Atkinson's line drawings are well-reproduced. This reviewer noticed two minor citation omissions or errors in an otherwise well-documented text. No page references are given for chapter 17, "The Conditions

of Collection Development,” which comes from pages 29–48 of *Collection Management: A New Treatise*. Chapter 21, “Old Forms, New Forms,” published as the fiftieth anniversary feature in *College & Research Libraries*, comes from pages 507–20, rather than 514–15. Securing permissions for the reprints required significant effort, and the editors express appreciation to Pamela Bluh and publishers for their assistance. For librarians who may have compiled personal folders with Atkinson articles for future reference and inspiration, *Community, Collaboration, and Collections* contains nearly all his library-related publications, except for three significant works published after this compilation. In July 2004 *Library Resources & Technical Services* reprinted “The Acquisitions Librarian as a Change Agent in the Transition to the Electronic Library” with Atkinson’s “reflections” as an introduction.⁴ The “Transversality” article mentioned above appeared in *Library Quarterly* in April 2005. Most recently, Atkinson’s “Six Key Challenges for the Future of Collection Development,” an introduction to the breakout sessions at the Janus Conference on Research Library Collections held in October 2005, is available online in Cornell University’s institutional repository.⁵

Ross Atkinson earned both Masters (1969) and Ph.D. (1976) degrees in Germanic Languages and Literatures from Harvard University before receiving his MLS degree at Simmons College in 1977. His first position at Northwestern University as a scholar-librarian was an innovative approach to integrate the library more fully into teaching and research activities. Ross subsequently became humanities bibliographer at Northwestern, and then moved to the University of Iowa in 1983, where he became assistant university librarian for collection development. From 1988 to 2006 he held several assistant university librarian-level titles at Cornell University. Atkinson had an active professional profile beyond his writing. A leader in the American Library Association, both in ALCTS and the Association for College and Research Libraries (ACRL) divisions, he chaired many ACRL groups and served as the ALCTS divisional representative to ALA Council. He contributed to numerous Association of Research Libraries, Research Libraries Group, and Digital Library Federation projects. Ross organized the Janus Conference to celebrate and envision the future of collection development in hopes that discussion would hasten the transition to digital collections and access.

Atkinson’s writing crossed a wide swath of topics that embraced collection development, preservation, acquisitions, digitization, and scholarly communications. A glance through the table of contents reminds us of his propensity for definition and rationale. The book’s epigraph quotes Atkinson’s hope that if the compilation “will get folks to stop for a moment, and to consider what they are doing and why, that would be for me the ultimate success” (vi).

For anyone unfamiliar with Atkinson’s work, the award-winning articles are a good introduction to his writing. “Managing Traditional Materials in an Online Environment: Some Definitions and Distinctions for a Future Collection Management,” won the 1999 Blackwell’s Scholarship Award for its focus on the relationship between digital and print objects in an increasingly online collection. Simple illustrations with line drawings help the reader follow Atkinson’s complex reasoning. “Networks, Hypertext, and Academic Information Services: Some Longer-Range Implications” won the K. G. Saur Award for the best *College & Research Libraries* article of 1993. Envisioning the sea change that could be possible with the combined power of networks and hypertext, the piece explored potential new roles for librarians to take advantage of technological capabilities. In “The Acquisitions Librarian as Change Agent in the Electronic Library,” which won the Best of LRTS Award in 1992, Atkinson observed that acquisitions librarians were the least prepared for the transition to the digital age, but uniquely positioned to lead change because of their business acumen. He advised acquisitions librarians to broaden their economic knowledge of electronic publishing; to acquire a deeper understanding of information technology; and to strengthen their understanding of mediation services. His witty, somewhat self-effacing introduction to the 2004 reprint in *LRTS* of “Learning from the Past” affirms his earlier recommendations with an updated prediction, “The ultimate challenge and opportunity, therefore, for the acquisitions librarian as change agent and facilitator of reappropriation—heralded admittedly somewhat prematurely in this article written in 1991—may well lie in the conceptualization and implementation of a distributed business plan for open-access publishing” (215).

Perhaps the publication of *Community, Collaboration, and Collections: The Writings of Ross Atkinson* will lead to more in-depth study of the Atkinson canon. While the chronological presentation in this compilation does not provide a context or subject grouping—if, indeed, that is possible—the depth of content in the Atkinson works offers the potential for future exploration of his themes and analysis of changes in his vision over time. This celebration of Ross Atkinson’s life and work is an enduring tribute that promises to inspire rereading of fundamental scholarship that will be relevant for generations to come. Unquestionably, librarians who read Ross Atkinson will consider what we are doing and why.—Linda L. Phillips (lphillips@utk.edu), University of Tennessee, Knoxville

References

1. Ross Atkinson, “Contingency and Contradiction: The Place(s) of the Library at the Dawn of the New Millennium,” *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 52, 1 (2001): 3–11.

2. Ross Atkinson, "Transversality and the Role of the Library as Fair Witness," *Library Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (2005): 169–89.
3. Peggy Johnson, *Fundamentals of Collection Development & Management* (Chicago: ALA, 2004); G. Edward Evans, *Developing Library and Information Center Collections* (Englewood, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 2000).
4. Ross Atkinson, "Reflection on 'The Acquisitions Librarian as Change Agent in the Transition to the Electronic Library,'" *Library Resources & Technical Services* 48, no. 3 (2004): 213–15.
5. Ross Atkinson, "Introduction for the Breakout Sessions: Six Key Challenges for the Future of Collection Development." Janus Conference on Research Library Collections, Oct. 2005, <http://dspace.library.cornell.edu/handle/1813/2608> (accessed Apr. 6, 2006).

The Nature of "A Work": Implications for the Organization of Knowledge. By Richard P. Smiraglia. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow, 2001. 182p. \$56.50 cloth (ISBN 0-8108-4037-5).

In the last three to four years, attention to the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) has been growing rapidly.¹ FRBR has been hailed as a "data model [that] holds great potential for improving access to library resources," and "FRBRization" has been called a "method for turning online public finding lists into online public catalogs."² The revision of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, currently under way as RDA: Resource Description and Access, is being structured with "the conceptual models for bibliographic and authority data developed by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)" as a key element in its design.³ However, concepts in FRBR that people find very difficult to grasp include the definitions of *work* and *expression* and how these differ from each other as well as how they differ from *manifestation*. FRBR, itself, equivocates about the nature of a work, claiming that "the concept of what constitutes a work and where the line of demarcation lies between one work and another may in fact be viewed differently from one culture to another."⁴ Therefore, now seems an excellent time for a fresh look at Smiraglia's 2001 book on the nature of "a work."

Smiraglia begins by introducing basic concepts, such as "bibliographic universe," "bibliographic entity," "bibliographic family," "text," "document," and, yes, "work." The dual nature, physical and intellectual, of a bibliographic entity is discussed. He dwells a bit upon the problems of collocating works using the current MARC bibliographic record structure, comparing it with the entity-relationship model. Because FRBR uses an entity-relationship model, this comparison is useful as well as enlightening. Smiraglia's second chapter gives an historical analysis of the concept of the work in Anglo-American cataloging, thus providing us with the cultural context we need to understand "work"

in this culture versus other cultures that FRBR suggests may lead us to other views of "work." Furthering this cultural understanding are chapter 3, which reflects on how the organizing mechanisms of the profession have developed ways of identifying and demonstrating relationships among works, and chapter 4, which considers the roles that works play in society and culture, drawing upon thought and definitions offered by writers in the areas of linguistics, philosophy, literary criticism, semiotics, and bibliography. Chapters 5 and 6 discuss several research studies that have been conducted, particularly on the derivative bibliographic relationship. This is the relationship that is most evident in relating members of a given bibliographic family, the members of which should all descend from the same common progenitor (or "ancestor"). (This is also the relationship that is most problematic in determining when a new work has been created.) Finally, in chapter 7, Smiraglia presents a summary and a "first attempt" at coming up with a "theory of the work" (121). He acknowledges that the data are insufficient to state a full-blown formal theory, but he believes that "the parameters of a theory of the work" can be seen beginning to emerge (129). Several appendices add considerable value to the book. One of particular interest is a chart showing definitions of "work" from twenty-one sources, from Panizzi in 1841 to Smiraglia in 2001.

Publishing being what it is (or at least what it was six years ago), most of Smiraglia's writing for this book was completed by 1999 or 2000. FRBR, having been published in 1998, had not yet grabbed the collective attention of bibliographic organizers. Smiraglia included mention of it as indicative of international work in the area (46–48, 51, 130), but did not discuss it substantially. However, many relevant issues can be found here. For example, a theme running through the book is the idea of ideational content and semantic content, and how these affect the nature of a work. Ideational content is defined in the glossary as the "propositions expressed in a work," or what Patrick Wilson said is often the subject matter of the text (167). The semantic content is defined as the "expression of the ideational content of a work in a particular set of linguistic strings" (30). Changes in these two aspects of content of a work (albeit sometimes using different terminology to express the concepts) appear again and again in the writings of the various authors cited by Smiraglia. It is generally understood that major changes in one or the other of the ideational content or semantic content results in a new work. However, Anglo-American culture has traditionally considered successive editions of a work to be manifestations of the same work, despite the fact that many new editions contain considerable changes to semantic content. Translations may represent totally different semantic content, yet Smiraglia points out that they are generally accepted as reiterations of the original work (130). So, is a "work" really made up of all of the expressions of a