

Book Reviews

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Do We Still Need Peer Review? An Argument for Change. By Thomas H. P. Gould. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2013. 175 p. \$60 paperback (ISBN: 978-0-8108-8574-5).

Despite the implication of the title, Thomas Gould states in the preface that indeed he “values peer review” (xi). He argues that it is no longer enough for those in academia to complain that the current peer review system is broken without offering suggestions for change. Instead, the time has come to examine from where we have come and to make a plan for meaningful change.

Many may understand the peer review process, but Gould takes the opportunity to outline the basic steps, from the research process through editorial decision to accept or reject a manuscript based on reviewer evaluation. In this opening chapter, Gould defines “peer,” gives a brief history of peer review, offers pros and cons of the peer review process, and briefly discusses why maintaining the status quo is not a viable option.

The concept of peer review has been around longer than many people would imagine. Gould’s overview of the history of peer review begins well before the invention of Gutenberg’s printing press and extends into the present. Before the invention of the printing press, the expensive and labor-intensive process of hand copying texts meant that very few of the small number of literate individuals had access to these works. The review process, however, was still occurring. By extending the definition of “peer” to “one’s betters” (13), Gould demonstrates the role early kings and church leaders had in reviewing ideas. Such “postreview,” occurring after a work was made public (24), was used to

“protect” people from dangerous ideas or discourage freethinkers.

The next chapter covers the period 1600–1950, at which time a review process began to more firmly develop in academia. Gould writes that “what arose in the seventeenth century was a new form of publishing that focused on smaller tomes, a multitude of authors, and a very real need for some system of editorship” (45), i.e., the academic journal and editor. Academia was changing as well. Ideas were easier to share, so more people were exposed to them. During this time, the number of universities and teachers increased. This chapter concludes with a discussion of peer review as it existed in the 1950s. By this time, peer review had transitioned from a process of postreview to a process of prior restraint in which ideas could be suppressed before they were published.

In chapter 4, Gould introduces readers to the anonymous, double-blind peer review process. He offers examples of the flaws of a process in which “what was once good is now not so good” (57). Utilizing previous research on the pitfalls of the anonymous, double-blind peer review process, Gould explores gender bias; a perceived “caste” system of published research; how writing style may affect the acceptance of an article; and cases in which reviewers or editors purposely stall a paper because it might be in competition with their own publishing efforts. Despite this, Gould still believes the review process is a viable method for determining what research is appropriate to publish. In chapter 5 he discusses how the Internet, social media tools, and online publishing affect perceptions of what is a worthy medium for publication. Digital

and open access (OA) publishing are common on many campuses, and it is fitting that he includes a discussion of these as part of an examination of the relevancy of peer review.

In the final chapters of the book, Gould presents various options for improving the peer review process. Chapter 6 opens by sharing “commandments” for improving the review process, which are taken in part from the article, “Five Commandments for APA” by Nora Newcombe.¹ Gould writes that while the commandments “may seem naive” (91), they offer a foundation that could be used when discussing options for reforming the peer review process. This chapter then focuses on many of the proposed solutions.

Gould presents several potential roles for librarians in improving peer review. Since librarians are in a unique position to understand the importance of expertly done research, he proposes a library-as-partner model (120–21). In this model, librarians go to faculty researchers to teach or re-teach them about the library and the resources that are available (119). While his view of the tension that exists between librarians and teaching faculty seems slightly generalized, Gould does see value in the role that librarians play in the research process. Other options that he presents for librarians and library involvement are as members of editorial teams and as leaders for OA journal publishing initiatives at universities.

Do We Still Need Peer Review? is a compact book with more historical information than one would expect. The historical discussion not only adds perspective to the problem at hand, but is one of the most interesting aspects of the work. True to his word,

Gould, rather than advocating for the abolishment of peer review, offers steps that can be taken to improve this important part of academia. Other authors have tackled this topic, and Gould cites many of them throughout his text and with references at the end of each chapter. This book would be useful for institutions discussing or reevaluating the peer review process, as well as those studying open access journals and online publishing.—*Lynda Aldana (laldana@umbc.edu), University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Baltimore, Maryland*

Reference

1. Nora S. Newcombe, "Five Commandments for APA," *American Psychologist* 57, no. 3 (2002): 202–5.

The Transformed Library: E-books, Expertise, and Evolution. By Jeanette Woodward. Chicago: ALA, 2013. 130 p. \$55 paperback (ISBN: 978-0-8389-1164-8).

From the title one may surmise that Jeanette Woodward's book focuses on e-books in libraries, but *The Transformed Library* is actually a timely and accurate assessment of the state of libraries in today's world relative to technology and economy. Woodward offers insightful advice to librarians on how to survive and thrive during these times of rapid technological transformation and dramatic budget cuts.

Woodward organizes this slim volume into nine chapters and includes an introduction, conclusion, and index. The first chapter, "Gutenberg Meets Kindle: The Arrival of Digital Books," focuses on e-book use in libraries and provides a brief history of the shift from the printed to digital word. Chapter 2, "Libraries vs. E-Publishers: The Library's Point of View," discusses the difficult relationship that currently exists between publishers and libraries that circulate e-books; the author also addresses related issues involving e-media in this chapter. Chapter 3,

"The Age of High Anxiety: Threats That Fuel Library Nightmares," examines the effect of outsourcing on library constituents, specifically when local governments decide to outsource public libraries to save money. Chapter 4, "The Library in Cyberspace," describes how libraries have fallen behind in communication and social networking technologies, and provides strategies for rectifying this situation. In chapter 5, "Will the Coffee Shop Save Us? The Library as Place," explores how libraries can fulfill people's need for a public place. Woodward contends that successful libraries are those that develop space from the patron's viewpoint, and when cozy and warm spatial designs delight patrons and invite them to stay. In chapter 6, "Library Careers That Won't Go Away," Woodward advises librarians on how to develop marketable skills for an uncertain future. She also briefly advises library science programs on how to graduate marketable students who possess the requisite skill set for twenty-first century information professionals. The next three chapters focus on survival strategies for different types of libraries: public libraries (chapter 7), academic libraries (chapter 8), and school libraries (chapter 9). Within these chapters, Woodward depicts different scenarios on how libraries could fail or succeed depending on how they adapt to the changing requirements of the communities they serve.

The main points Woodward repeats throughout her book are that libraries must not only evolve technologically to stay current with user needs, but they must also evolve spatially and programmatically. Libraries must stay customer-focused to maintain relevancy and garner community support, especially in these difficult economic times. These survival strategies also include workflow and daily task adjustments, and expanding hours of service. Such flexibility and customer-centric policies will result in patrons

viewing their libraries as essential, and fighting to keep them financed.

Woodward's viewpoint is not apocalyptic, but at times she is realistically grim, particularly in cases where libraries fail to be customer-oriented. She stresses that librarians must market themselves and their services, as constituents and financial decision-makers will not automatically recognize the value of information professionals. Librarians must reach out and educate said decision makers while garnering the support of those who benefit from their services. Most importantly, Woodward stresses that as long as libraries are receptive to change and evolve with their communities, they will ultimately survive.

In the introduction Woodward states that she is writing for other librarians. However, I would highly recommend this read to first-year library science (LIS) students as her book provides an excellent overview and summary of where libraries have been, their current state of affairs, and their future outlook. Woodward offers a good framework for such students beginning their studies; she gives them an accurate context within which to approach topics as they learn about the field and the future roles that information professionals will fulfill. Woodward's book would give LIS students a solid basis from which to contemplate the various types of communities they may be best suited to serve. Her book could also help students develop strategies for success in the profession.—*Shannon Fox (sfox@austincollege.edu), Austin College, Sherman, Texas*

Library Collection Development for Professional Programs: Trends and Best Practices. Edited by Sara Holder. McGill University: IGI Global, 2013. 478 p. \$175 hardcover (ISBN: 978-1-4666-1897-8).

Librarians are inherently disadvantaged in collecting for professional programs as they often approach this responsibility as an outsider. Standard