Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

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Column Editor's Note: For those hearing a calling in librarianship, the variety of options for tailoring a career might not be immediately evident. Modern libraries are home to a plethora of services and resources, and even though libraries and those who keep them running are constantly evolving, patrons have a steadfast feeling of the library being "theirs." Librarian and Inside Higher Ed *blogger* **Barbara Fister** *explores this in her recent post, "What Can Higher Ed Learn from Libraries?" One of the commenters supporting her piece offers one reason for this loyalty: "libraries are about people." How deftly put! With this in mind, imagine the multiplicity of people served by libraries, people whom library professionals can assist: students at different points along their academic continuum, genealogy researchers, book groups, and academics in a myriad of disciplines — including such diverse fields as literature, communication, STEM disciplines, and environmental sustainability.*

How appropriate, then, that this month's reviewers address titles that explore one of these diverse fields and those who might curate and disseminate its information and knowledge. Many thanks to reviewers **Wm. Joseph Thomas** *and* **Burton Callicott** *for sharing their thoughts on these books. Happy reading, everyone! — DV*

Kane, Laura Townsend, ed. *Working in the Virtual Stacks: The New Library and Information Science*. Chicago: ALA Editions, 2011.
978-0-8389-1103-7. 184 pages. $47.00.

Reviewed by **Wm. Joseph Thomas** (Head of Collection Development, Joyner Library, East Carolina University) <thomasw@ecu.edu>

Working in the Virtual Stacks: The New Library and Information Science is intended to inspire people to consider librarianship as a career. It is a sequel of sorts to **Kane's** *Straight from the Stacks* (2003), but is arranged differently and takes into account the significant changes technology has wrought on librarianship. Rather than being arranged by library and position type, as some other career guides are, *Working in the Virtual Stacks* is divided into five chapters that focus on librarian roles: Subject Specialists, Technology Gurus and Social Networkers, Teachers and Community Liaisons, Entrepreneurs, and Administrators. About half the book is devoted to the first two chapters, and four of the five chapters address the need for librarians to engage in educational activities with patrons. Indeed, **Kane** and several of the contributors note that teaching is becoming a "core professional responsibility" for librarians (99). Each chapter begins with roughly five pages describing the environments, skills, education and training, and relevant professional associations. The skills sections have bulleted lists with little overlap. Four of the five chapters have "all library types" in the environment. The chapter on librarians as entrepreneurs provides several options for work environment because it focuses on non-library jobs for "freelancers." There is some evidence of entrepreneurship within libraries already, but librarians should hone the entrepreneurial skills **Kane** suggests: developing new products and services, marketing themselves, and most importantly, demonstrating how libraries add value to their institutions.

The majority of each chapter is devoted to "Spotlights" on various librarians; these spotlights are the best part of the book. Many of the 34 spotlighted librarians are well-known speakers and authors in library circles, including **Steven J. Bell, Meredith Farkas, Scott Walter,** and **Jessamyn West.** These spotlighted librarians come from a variety of academic, medical, public, school, and special libraries, and in their spotlights address the type of work featured in that chapter. Many of them address what drew them into librarianship, and

scattered throughout the spotlights are helpful tips, such as getting library experience prior to committing to library school. Several themes recur, including a focus on end users, innate curiosity, the influence of technology, and the need for librarians always to keep learning. Each spotlight ends with recommended Websites, and each chapter ends with a few notes. Although there is an index, a short section containing brief profiles of the spotlighted librarians would have been nice.

Overall, **Kane** and the spotlighted librarians do a good job showing that, even though librarians have changed how they engage with their users, the mission of librarians remains to "connect people to the right information" (152).

The most serious shortfall of *Working in the Virtual Stacks: The New Library and Information Science* is that it does not include technical services librarians, although the "New Library and Information Science" depends on high quality metadata and the efficient acquisition and management of library resources. Despite this omission, *Working in the Virtual Stacks* is well suited for incoming library science students, and a book you just want to see succeed.

Madu, Christian N. and **Chu-Hua Kuei,** eds. *Handbook of Sustainability Management.* Hackensack, NJ: World Scientific, 2012. 978-9814354813. 912 pages. $270.00.

Reviewed by **Burton Callicott** (Reference Librarian, College of Charleston)
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Madu and **Kuei,** management science faculty members at **Pace University,** have compiled a weighty tome that hopes to "serve as a good reference book on sustainability management." The book is a collection of 41 essays that focus primarily on the practical, "nuts and bolts," aspects of sustainability and sustainability management. Chapter titles include: "Benchmarking and Process Change for Green Supply Chain Management," "Sustainable Solid Waste Management for Developing Asian Countries: A Case Study for Phitsanulok Municipality, Thailand," and "Environmental Decision Making: Road Maps and Management Science Tools." This is not the kind of book you curl up with on a leisurely weekend afternoon!

The essays tend to be clear and heavy on praxis rather than theory. This is a very manly book in the clichéd sense that men want to fix problems (and women want to talk about them). Since pretty much nothing other than profit motivated human progress since the dawn of currency, there are a lot of things in the world that are now broken or depleted. Global climate change is the obvious and ultimate sum of the problems related to bottom line, return on investment thinking. It is becoming more obvious every day where we see weather patterns rapidly shift, and that this, along with overuse of aquifers, excessive use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides are causing food crops to fail. Other than rats and cockroaches, just about every species is facing tremendous stresses (or worse) due to warming temperatures and loss of habitat. *Sustainability Management* is one of a number of new works that attempt to show readers how to shift from the single to a triple bottom line approach: "TBL looks at the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of businesses. Thus, sustainability issues here recognize the importance of businesses to make profit, proactively manage the environment for sustainability, and perform their social function such as job creation in their immediate and extended communities" (ix). Measures suggested in this book present at least some moderate steps

towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other ideas that hope to curb the problems associated with pollution and wonton overuse and misuse of resources.

Since this book was conceived in a school of business, it makes sense that the editors would latch onto the traditional definition of sustainability that centers on development "sustainability is development that meets the present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Clearly, this definition is human-centric — the "generations" mentioned here do not refer to generations of dolphins or Red Cockaded Woodpeckers. Coming from an old school environmentalist background, I am somewhat troubled by the focus on "job creation" and "proactively managing the environment," but by the same token, old school environmentalism has been pretty much an abject failure. Shrilly sounding the environmental apocalypse alarm and shaking fingers is apparently not very successful when it comes to massive cultural change. Corporations were smarter (and had the resources) to hire sophisticated advertisement firms that successfully drowned out the dire warnings of **Muir, Leopold,** and their followers. Proponents of sustainability have learned from the failures of doomsday environmentalists and take a more holistic and systemic approach. Through inclusiveness, the sustainability movement represents something much more positive and approaches problems in a much more sophisticated way than its predecessors. One of the huge blind spots of the old school environmentalists was class. The majority of those who were staging protests and writing books had the economic means and the educational background to do so. They cared little for human populations and social rights without understanding that these issues are intimately tied to environmental issues. *Sustainability* is as much interested in worker's rights and food security as it is about rising sea levels. By taking a step back and seeing the larger picture and the myriad of forces at work, these pioneers of sustainability thinking are setting the stage for some real substantive and vital change.

Though it is useful and valuable, this collection of essays is not quite so revolutionary. This is not to say that it is of poor quality, just that the concern is more about the business part of the equation and has more modest goals. Many of the essays begin with some cursory sustainability precepts before getting into the nitty gritty: "*Sustainability* is an important consideration in construction and the concept of sustainability in the context of construction is about creating and maintaining a healthy-built environment and at the same time focusing on minimizing resources and energy consumption, thereby reducing damage to the environment, encouraging reuse and recycling, and maximizing protection for the natural environment" (441-442).

This is an odd book in that it is clearly geared for people in sustainable management positions but it is written by academics. The editors are right to call it a reference book in that it covers a lot of ground — figuratively and literally. The scope is truly international and the topics range from supply networks to development policies. It would have been nice if the editors had made an attempt to group the essays by theme but unfortunately there appears to be little logic to the order of the essays. It is hard to imagine marketing this book. A few of the chapters, such as "Japan for Sustainability," are more historical and broad based but, for the most part, the chapters are specific and deal with real world issues and approaches. Relevant chapters could be very useful for individuals who find themselves heading up what most likely is a new department or new focus to an established business or even government office. "The use of environmental assessment tools can help in delivering buildings better suited to their physical settings and that impact on their socio-economic and environmental context" (454). But it would seem excessive and... *unsustainable* to purchase this book just for one chapter or two chapters. At the same time, I do not imagine that there will be too many libraries that will want to add this title to their collection. Schools that have a program in sustainability or even environmental studies may want to have a copy so that students can see what kinds of things are being written for practitioners, but it would not be much value to an undergrad writing a paper on sustainability or even sustainability management. All in all, this is a timely and professionally edited volume but its audience may be somewhat limited. ✿