

Book Reviews

RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage reviews books, reports, new periodicals, databases, websites, blogs, and other electronic resources, as well as exhibition, book, and auction catalogs pertaining directly and indirectly to the fields of rare book librarianship, manuscripts curatorship, archives management, and special collections administration. Publishers, librarians, and archivists are asked to send appropriate publications for review or notice to the Reviews Editor.

Due to space limitations, it may not be possible for all books received to be reviewed in *RBM*. Books or publication announcements should be sent to the Reviews Editor: Amy Cooper Cary, Raynor Memorial Library, Marquette University, 1415 W. Wisconsin Ave, Milwaukee, WI 53233-2221, e-mail: amy.cary@marquette.edu, (414) 288-5901.

Peter Devereaux and Carla Diane Hayden. *The Card Catalog: Books, Cards, and Literary Treasures*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2017. 224p. Hardcover, \$35.00 (ISBN 9781452145402).

In an early archives job, I typed the name and subject entries at the top of card sets we received from the Library of Congress. It was exacting work and I really enjoyed it, including the filing. At a venerable manuscript repository, the cards ranged from the printed ones I placed on top of the rods (to be double-checked before they slipped into their forever homes) and those written in a spidery handwriting that could easily have been 100 years old. It made me feel part of a long tradition of information mavens.

Author Peter Devereaux notes that, “Although the Library of Congress is frequently—and erroneously—credited with the invention of the card catalog, it was ironically one of the last [institutions] to embrace it. Nevertheless, its innovative classification system and mass distribution of catalog cards made it the standard-bearer, allowing smaller libraries in the farthest corners of the country to possess the same quality catalog as the greatest libraries in the world” (113).

This beautiful volume is part illustrated history of the card catalog and cataloging at the Library of Congress and part memory book and coffee table volume. It succeeds very well at both. Devereaux traces the origins of the library catalog from its idiosyncratic beginnings in the ancient world, in what he calls “a tangible example of humanity’s effort to establish and preserve the possibility of order” (9). The system of a unified national catalog dates back to the French Revolution, where

playing cards were used because of their uniformity and easy availability. Thomas Jefferson's library, which became the nucleus of the Library, arrived with his own catalog, based on Francis Bacon's (referred to as an "overall brilliant Renaissance man" [59]) three categories of Memory, Reason, and Imagination. The original catalog adapted by the first Librarian of Congress was an unwieldy bound volume.

The book is full of fascinating detail, which librarians and nonlibrarians will appreciate:

- Late fees for members of Congress in 1815 were a dollar a day!
- Researcher access to the card catalog didn't appear until the 1860s at the Boston Atheneum.
- For much of the late nineteenth century, the "catalogue" existed largely in the head of the Librarian.
- Until the advent of Linotype-printed cards, a precise "library hand" was taught in library schools.
- The ALA Library Bureau sold cards, cabinets, and even hole punches to libraries.
- "[A]t its peak in 1969, nearly 79 million cards were printed and distributed annually [by the Library of Congress]" (113).

Nearly half the book chronicles the Library before the modern card catalog was instituted. Illustrations pair catalog cards of various vintages with title page reproductions from each book. These range from the *Iliad* and William Blake through *Leaves of Grass*, *The Great Gatsby*—and the *Joy of Cooking*, rounding out with *Where the Wild Things Are*. The illustrations tend toward the "greats," though with a substantial representation by African American authors. Still, it might have been nice to see some obscure pamphlets, overwrought novels, or other less well-known works to underscore the notion that LC is the repository for published works both celebrated and simply "in print."

"The card catalog was functional yet flawed, an astonishing innovation destined from the start to collapse under its own weight," notes Devereaux (159). Calls for its demise/replacement date back to 1938 as expanding catalogs outgrew available library space—nowhere more painfully than at the Library. Following the successful implementation of the MARC cataloging system, the card catalog was "frozen" in 1980.

What to do with the old cards? Some libraries held mock funerals. Cards were dumped, recycled—and made into art installations. The catalog card was recognized as a kinetic object, reflecting styles of writing, idiosyncratic comments, and

valued for their beauty to the eye. They also conjured memories for researchers who spent hours flipping through them. Some bemoaned the loss of serendipitously discovering a new reading adventure simply because one book's card was nestled next to another. The Library of Congress catalog, unlike others', was retained in recognition of the human error and simplification involved in data entry, in the process of which handwritten additions and other information were lost.

This volume pays tribute to the beauty and personality of the catalog card, as well as the standardization and accessibility of the centralized cataloging system. Without romanticizing the card catalog's past, it reminds us of what a robust and evolving tool it has been and how its main strengths carry over into our modern online species.—*Kathy Marquis, Wyoming State Archives*

Alison Cullingford. *The Special Collections Handbook*, Second Edition. London:

Facet Publishing, 2017. 336p. \$85.00 (ISBN 978-1-78330-126-3).

Alison Cullingford's *The Special Collections Handbook* provides information specialists with a timely guide to managing the rapid and continuous changes buffeting today's libraries, archives, and museums. First published in 2011 during the global recession, the book focuses on all aspects of special collections work. The work is informed by the ongoing political and economic uncertainties caused by budget cuts and austerity policies in the cultural heritage and education sectors. Since the book's initial publication, information specialists have recognized the need to "tell their story" and demonstrate their value to parent organizations, donors, and community members. Advocacy and community engagement are now seen as being critical business functions. Indeed, Cullingford argues that librarians and archivists must adopt a new "mind-set" (along with skills and tools) if they are to be successful in the digital era. The revised and greatly expanded 2017 second edition of *The Special Collections Handbook* examines this new mentality and professional shift in priorities. According to the author, special collections specialists must embrace innovation, entrepreneurialism, and marketing to navigate the current turbulent information environment.

Drawing on her work as a librarian, Alison Cullingford brings a practitioner's sensibility to the discussion of the profession's core concepts, best practices, and emerging trends. Serving as the special collections librarian at the University of Bradford, Cullingford's firsthand experience working with collections informs her examination of such curatorial challenges as "hidden collections" and the preservation of analog and digital holdings. Additionally, her time spent in a university setting has afforded her a strong command of library instruction and trends in digital scholarship. As a coauthor of the OCLC survey of special collections and archives in the United Kingdom and Ireland, Cullingford has a comprehensive understanding of