

The section on decoration discusses the style, symbols, and themes of the manuscript as a whole, including anecdotes and influences with other manuscripts. Themes and symbols highlighted are: the Cross, the Eucharist, the lozenge shape, angels, the Evangelists, animals, scenes from the Gospels, and textual allusions (for example, two lions representing both Christ and the devil). These symbols and themes are discussed in regard to how they specifically appear in the Book of Kells as well as their general appearance in manuscripts, which is again very useful for those who are not familiar with medieval manuscript illustration. One slight disappointment is that there is no thorough discussion on the decoration of insular manuscripts in general.

The final section on scribes and artists includes a description of the script, writing conventions used, and noncontemporary corrections to the text. The illustrations tied to the scribal hand descriptions are enormously helpful in understanding how the hands differ and I truly wish all paleographic descriptions used illustrations in this way. There is also a discussion of the artists and their various roles (goldsmith, portrait painter, and illustrator) and the materials and tools (vellum, pigments, inks) used to create the manuscript.

I cannot reiterate strongly enough how valuable I feel this book is for early scholars and for teaching manuscript studies. The general organization of the contents, the descriptions and explanations of concepts, and the sheer breadth of how much Dr. Meehan covers in a short volume all provide so much potential for learning and teaching. I can see this volume working well in a teaching collection as well as on a course syllabus, especially with its low price point. Teaching purposes aside, this is a fun volume for any collection.—*Diana La Femina*

**Kathy Peiss.** *Information Hunters: When Librarians, Soldiers, and Spies Banded Together in World War II Europe.* Oxford University Press, 2019. Ebook, 296p. (<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190944612.001.0001>)

Searching for vital intelligence behind enemy lines, inventing essential technology in the nick of time, and saving priceless relics from unknown and treacherous fates: librarians and other pioneers on the leading edge of information science take center stage in a global clash between democratic freedom and authoritarianism in *Information Hunters*. Eminent historian of American culture Kathy Peiss has provided a scholarly work to foreground the librarians, archivists, and intelligence officers sidelined during the recent popularity of the “Monuments Men,” showcasing the contributions of the men—and women—who helped save humanity’s written legacy and liberate information from its constraints. Beyond the individual stories, however, is the mixed, sometimes murky legacy of American collecting and how prestigious research libraries benefited from the fog of war.

Much of Peiss's scholarship has focused on the study of gender and sexuality in American culture. Her work has looked at issues of agency among women and minority groups in early modern America, including *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York*, published in 1982. Other full-length historical analyses have examined fashion and beauty standards, such as *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture* (1998). With *Information Hunters*, Peiss trains her critical gaze on the pivotal World War II period to discern the individuals and factors that influenced how information would be managed and shared in a radically reconfigured world. Forgoing gender analysis for the most part while following the interwoven threads of the nascent information revolution before, during, and after World War II, Peiss adds complexity to the previous institutional and biographical histories. Well-known men from the history of twentieth-century librarianship such as Archibald MacLeish and Frederick Kilgour move alongside lesser-known figures such as Library of Congress cataloger turned intelligence operative in occupied Paris, Maria Josepha Meyer.

From her prestigious position as the Roy F. and Jeannette P. Nichols Professor of American History at the University of Pennsylvania, Peiss followed a personal thread connecting her to one of the historical actors involved in this story to examine the confluence of evolving information science and librarianship with the birth of American intelligence operations. Deeply entwined is her appreciation for the "social lives and secret lives of books" (215), helping us understand how millions of textual objects—some invaluable evidence of cultures nearly eradicated—exchanged hands and added to their layers of history, some hidden forever.

As people and nations around the world confronted the rise of fascism and the specter of genocide played out through international conflict and horrific war, experts inside and outside of librarianship wrestled with how to manage, preserve, and operationalize rapidly expanding volumes of information. Through their coordination and collaboration with government intelligence services and allied military operations, librarians and other information professionals became valuable assets to help make "open source" information—treated by Peiss as the vast array of published and non-secret materials including serials, newspapers, and monographs that gained sudden importance as sources of strategic intelligence—more accessible and to reorder and process the textual collections looted and confiscated by armies on multiple fronts.

*Information Hunters* seeks in part to explain the emergence of American librarians and research centers as international leaders through the technological developments, wartime service, and collecting opportunities of World War II. "American librarians, soldiers, and spies came together in unique conditions in World War II, with its uprooting and destruction of culture, ideological warfare, and state-led

mobilization of knowledge" (14). Peiss asserts that the wartime missions "gave librarians a new confidence about the importance of research libraries and international collections" in supporting American global dominance politically and intellectually, while facilitating the greater dissemination of knowledge worldwide (14).

Peiss uses tightly packed writing to convey the results of meticulous scouring of archives and government records, weaving a dizzying array of characters and acronyms, some previously known and others newly centered in the grand narrative of World War II. She examines the uniquely appropriate skill sets and vital contribution of librarians and archivists while highlighting the intrigue and daring escapades of some of them working alongside spies in neutral places, such as Lisbon, and on or near the front lines in Poland, France, and ultimately Germany. With carefully constructed chronologies of bureaucratic and agency development befitting a social history, Peiss includes thefts and duplicitous subterfuges, ethical lapses and impossible choices to keep the excitement of wartime stories in place for readers not enthralled enough by the uncertain fates of looted manuscripts, cataloguing breakthroughs for indexing reams of journals and newspapers and pulp novels, or rapid advances in field imaging for microreproduction.

With the partnership of MacLeish, the charismatic leader of the Librarian of Congress during the war years who led its reorganization, and Wild Bill Donovan, the head of the newly formed Office of Strategic Service (OSS), Peiss illustrates the emerging paradigm of an information-centered world, as the Library of Congress modernized and the US embraced the need for a well-resourced and active intelligence apparatus. Libraries and librarians were present at the birth of modern American intelligence services. "From the first, Donovan had been influenced by MacLeish, who believed that librarians were uniquely qualified to organize, classify, and retrieve information from abroad" (19).

Peiss allows the evolution of information-gathering entities and military intelligence roles for the various cultural professionals, from journalists and booksellers to anthropologists, to convey the unfolding of the war and postwar conflict. Over the course of seven chapters, Peiss employs a largely chronological approach to move from prewar debates on the future of the book and professional librarianship through the urgent need to collect and analyze vast arrays of open source information and intelligence, acquire and manage tons of Nazi archives and the cultural legacy of fascism and propaganda, and the drive to save millions of looted, stolen, and damaged items. The intelligence efforts of librarians working for the Library of Congress and OSS transformed to include service in military units such as the T-Forces that confiscated or purchased massive amounts of material in the "wild scramble" toward the end of the war.

The detailed study treatment of the Interdepartmental Committee for the Acquisition of Foreign Publications (IDC) within the OSS and the early-career influences on Kilgour, who would later become the founding director of OCLC after a distinguished academic career, is valuable. Peiss uses the rapidly evolving work of the IDC and other agencies to highlight fascinating individuals including Adel Kibre (42). One of the few female field directors, Kibre had already established herself as a medievalist scholar and expert in microphotography before becoming one of IDC's most effective agents. IDC operatives like Kibre and the author's uncle, Reuben Peiss, hopped from neutral countries to occupied areas, competing against German and Japanese agents, gathering materials for microfilming and acquisition, dealing with booksellers and underground dealers, often with Nazi connections, devoting themselves to preservation of information and doing what they could to win the war (53). Through innovations such as the Subject Index Section of IDC, which began in August 1943, Kilgour and "the librarians of the IDC transformed the familiar forms of books and serials into the genre of intelligence" (61).

Peiss focuses on Europe and the collecting, imaging, indexing, and analysis work along the ever-shifting frontlines and in the aftermath of the Holocaust. The book's brief glimpses into Africa, southern Asia, and the intersection of British imperial interests with the Allied war effort, and China and the role missionaries and other agents of westernization and colonialism across the world, point toward a fascinating gap one may wish Peiss engaged with more fully, particularly with later awareness of the rise of international studies and scholarly focus on non-Western cultures that research libraries would struggle to address in the decades to come.

Between astounding numerical analyses and dramatic photographs, readers are confronted with calamitous carnage enacted upon Jewish cultural heritage and the invaluable libraries of Europe. Librarians and archivists working within the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (MFAA) division of the US Army struggled with millions of moldering scrolls and rare books, rescued from caves and bombed-out buildings across the continent, at the Rothschild Library and Offenbach Documents Archive in Frankfurt. As Allied forces crept closer to victory, the Library of Congress Mission sought to preserve European culture evidence of the fascist period, working in cooperation with American universities, while various groups, sometimes in competition, gathered documents for processing in massive document repositories.

Peiss includes in these efforts the aggressively unilateral approach of others, including the Hoover Institution at Stanford, the former President himself, and his agents (122–123). With cigarettes and cash, care packages and favors, collectors used whatever means necessary to acquire. One notorious postwar controversy to emerge

from dubious collecting practices was the publication of Goebbels's extensive diaries, although the combination of stories and vague recollections on how they were acquired never established a clear chain of custody. Some figures instrumental in the successful acquisition of invaluable materials also benefited financially through their connections, such as Max Loeb's sale of looted items through his bookshop in New York. Thinkers who helped the world make sense of the rise of fascism and genocide such as Hannah Arendt, through emerging organizations such as Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, advised on the fate of the remnants of cultural genocide, finalizing the work of MFAA and LCM. Ultimately hundreds of thousands of items of Judaica were distributed to American libraries, while many of the most important and precious were removed by scholars and complicit administrators before official channels could decide appropriate policies.

Peiss attempts to untangle the historical morass of how the Allies, from the West and the Soviet Union, dealt with the millions of volumes of Nazi propaganda, fascist-era popular literature, and usable scholarly and scientific publications. Small-town libraries and military officials alike had to navigate a shifting minefield of regulations for segregating, destroying, and censoring materials, while the American public back across the Atlantic had moments of horror in reaction to infamous "Order No. 4" and news of "book burning, American style." Approaches to keeping books varied greatly between the allied zones of occupation, as well as considerations for ensuring that learning and reading material were available while stamping out the Nazi influence.

With *Information Hunters*, Peiss weaves librarians and information science back into the complex, alternately tragic and heroic telling of the great battles of the first half of the twentieth century: between authoritarianism and personal liberty, racial nationalism and democratic multiculturalism, freedom of expression and centralized power and total war. Information was key to the technological advances and innovation that allowed the modern age to survive World War II and the Cold War. Although most returned to library jobs after the war, the information hunters and their technological innovations and dedication were key to victory, despite how tenuous the survival of manuscripts, books, and the freedoms that allow them to exist can still seem to be.—*Joshua C. Youngblood, University of Arkansas*

**Michael Vinson.** *Bluffing Texas Style: The Arsons, Forgeries, and High-Stakes Poker Careers of Rare Book Dealer Johnny Jenkins*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2020. Paperback, 250p. \$21.95 (ISBN 978-0-8061-6542-4).

The story of Johnny Jenkins, rare book dealer, forger, gambler, and misterioso, has haunted me since my days in library school nearly a decade ago. I first encountered Jenkins through his publication *Rare Books and Manuscript Thefts: A Security System*