a history as possible. The sometimes opaque nature of the text comes from trying to give as thorough an account as possible of a complex topic, rather than by leaving too much out.

Despite, or perhaps because of, this level of detail, it is difficult to see the series as a whole getting heavy use by scholars conducting in-depth research projects. This is due to the somewhat scattered nature of the text, which can make it difficult to pinpoint key concepts and ideas and which renders it unwieldy for someone wanting to find a concise description of one specific topic. However, for persons interested in libraries who wish to immerse themselves in lush detail, From Petrarch to Michelangelo shines in terms of sheer visual splendor. As is the case with the other four volumes, each chapter is lavishly illustrated with an abundance of glossy full-color and black-and-white photographs that depict books and manuscripts, library architecture, and historical figures. For those interested in a visual history of libraries and print culture, this volume is a treat.

Overall, From Petrarch to Michelangelo is a physically beautiful production whose content provides a relatively thorough, although decentralized, discussion of humanism. Mr. Staikos should be commended for the amount of research that has gone into this work, and the book certainly has a great deal of interesting, informative content. While it could arguably use a tighter overall structure, it is nevertheless an impressive accomplishment and provides an interesting discussion of how print culture functioned in the early modern period.—Elizabeth Brander, Rare Books Librarian, Washington University School of Medicine.


Steam-Powered Knowledge: William Chambers and the Business of Publishing, 1820–1860 is an exploration of the emerging technologies in the mid-nineteenth century that led to a rise in the availability of low-cost books—cheap print, as it was called. New technologies such as the steam-powered printing press and stereotype plates converged with the emergence of railways and steamships. With these new techniques, books could be produced and sold at a significantly lower cost, making them accessible to a wider audience. A virtuous cycle was created; inexpensive books led to a rise in literacy in England that in turn increased the market for cheap print.

While William Chambers’ company, W. & R. Chambers, is the leading example of a publishing and printing company that benefited from these new technologies, it is not the sole focus of the book. In spite of the book’s title, Aileen Fyfe takes a wide view of the entire publishing and printing industry. To be sure, the strongest
sections are those concentrating on Chambers. Other publishers discussed include Charles Knight and the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK), George Routledge, and, to a lesser extent, religious publishing societies.

The book is divided into three parts addressing publishing, railways, and transatlantic steamships. Each section discusses the social, political, and commercial factors in which these new processes operated as well as the new steam-powered technologies themselves. Part I, which covers publishing and printing, is by far the best part of the book—good enough, perhaps, to make some readers wish Fyfe had extended it to the entire book. To some extent, the additional sections on rail and shipping dissipate the book’s focus.

In Part I, Fyfe uses an analysis of W. & R. Chambers as a frame in which to discuss the technological innovations that slowly revolutionized the printing industry. Thankfully, Fyfe does not assume that the company’s adoption of new technologies was simply inevitable; instead, she explores the social and commercial forces that led Chambers to become one of the earliest printing industries (outside of newspapers) to switch to steam-powered machines.

Fyfe connects cheap print to the growth of a railway system in Britain by chronicling, in Part II, the emergence of railway bookstalls. W. & R. Chambers, because their main business was supplying instructive and educational books, was less dependent on railway bookstalls than their competitor, George Routledge, who provided American reprints and cheap fiction. Thus, Fyfe makes only cursory mention of Chambers throughout Part II, rendering it more of an aside than a continuation of Fyfe’s main thesis. In any case, the railways revolutionized the transportation of cargo, making it cheaper and faster to ship printed materials. Railways also increased competition among publishers as railway bookstalls proliferated the availability of cheap print. While these chapters provide greater context for the distribution channels of cheap print and the types of books most often sold, Fyfe’s use of bookstalls as a conceptual link between cheap print and railway expansion is perhaps overdone, in that fully one third of the book contains little mention of W. & R. Chambers.

At the same time that railways were being built across Great Britain, steamships were developing as a new form of transatlantic transportation. Part III is devoted to exploring the ways steamships gave publishing companies the opportunity to develop their transatlantic business. W. & R. Chambers made use of steamships to increase their importation of books to the United States. As she did with the railways in Part II, Fyfe concentrates more on the steamship industry than on publishing in general or Chambers more specifically. However, in the latter half of the
section, Fyfe returns to W. & R. Chambers and relates their transatlantic business directly back to the availability of steamships.

Overall, *Steam-Powered Knowledge* provides a well-researched overview of how the rise of steam-powered technologies influenced the publishing and printing industries, using W. & R. Chambers as a case study. Fyfe does not assume that these new technologies revolutionized the business of publishing; rather, she includes them within the context of social, commercial, and political factors. William’s brother Robert Chambers once wrote that, of all the changes he had seen in his lifetime, the most influential were “the improvements in what I would call, comprehensively, access to knowledge.” (3) In many ways, these improvements were the direct result of the rise of cheap print brought about in large part because of the technological changes Fyfe details in her book. Readers interested in the printing and publishing industry, as well as those interested in technological innovations, will find *Steam-Powered Knowledge* an informative study of a forty-year period that saw tremendous change in the business of publishing.—Cynthia Harbeson, Processing Archivist and Assistant Professor, Appalachian State University.


*Make Your Own History: Documenting Feminist & Queer Activism in the 21st Century*, edited by Lyz Bly and Kelly Wooten, features essays by archivists, librarians, and activists that explore collecting, preserving, and providing access to materials produced by contemporary feminist and queer activist movements. Thought provoking and informative, this collection will be useful to archivists, librarians, activists, and scholars interested in women’s and LGBT history; and, despite the book’s particular focus, the best essays in this anthology will be useful to archivists and librarians throughout the field.

Several of the essays in the book focus on collecting zines of the Riot Grrrl movement, the feminist punk subculture that developed during the 1990s. Jenna Freedman’s article, “Self-Publication with Riot Grrrl Ideals,” provides a useful overview of this genre of zines and what makes them unique. Pre-Internet era, these zines were a means for young women to communicate their thoughts, ideas, and lives; as such, they provide direct access to voices and experiences not found in mainstream media. Moreover, Riot Grrrl zines are valuable as documentation of a subculture that historically has been misinterpreted or derided by the press, when covered at all. Kate Eichhorn observes that the placement of materials in an archival repository acknowledges and solidifies their importance and that the emergence of zine collections in libraries and archives underscores the value of zines as cultural products. In her essay about