archival collections), but they do not reference basic archival literature or standards on archival processing; nor do they suggest working with an archivist for these collections.

The book concludes with two short chapters dedicated to continuing education and selected reference resources for those looking to dive deeper into specific areas of rare book librarianship. Overall, the work is well written and concise, and it provides basic information to those completely unfamiliar with the field. Those who are entering from a related position may want to pick and choose chapters to supplement their current knowledge.—Cassandra A. Schmitt, Head of Access for Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.


In February of 2012, more than 80 participants from thirteen countries converged at the University of Antwerp for a two-day conference to discuss essential competences for cultural heritage professionals and how these competences can be transmitted through education and training. Ambassadors of the Book is the published compilation of proceedings that emerged from the conference. Providing the perspectives of practitioners as well as educators, the book offers a theoretical approach to the topic that reflects the viewpoints of both groups of stakeholders.

The conference was organized in two distinct parts, dedicating the first day to exploring competences and then progressing to a discussion on the second day about how education and training can develop these competences. However, these published proceedings do not appear to follow the same format. The book begins with a discussion by Jan Bos of the nature of special collections, identifying precisely what these collections are, before the later papers explore the competences necessary to work within them. The included papers are not grouped into any topical subsections, and there is not a clear sense of the method employed in sequencing them within the book.

It is worth making a note about terminology present in the title and throughout the book. In the United States, we more often use the term “competencies” rather than “competences” to discuss necessary knowledge and skills, but Deirdre Stam establishes a distinction between the two terms in her paper. She suggests that “competence” is a more general term, appropriately applied to general understanding and proficiency, and “competency” is actually a subtopic of the former, used to discuss the demonstrable ability to perform specific tasks (32). The competences discussed in the book include a wide range of knowledge and skills required to
perform the spectrum of duties required of cultural heritage professionals, including recognition of the importance of information technology and digitization in current and future library environments, and an exploration of the effectiveness of practical training and experiential learning in addition to classroom instruction.

The book contains a limited number of illustrations, which is to be expected, because several of the papers are more speculative than academic in nature. The few figures that are included consist primarily of tables and charts, providing graphical representations of relevant data. Some are derived from the results of two different studies: the first, on educational opportunities and training needs for the care of digital collections; and the second, based on a questionnaire soliciting responses about what content should be included in descriptions of book bindings. Others offer tabular representations of information, such as Susan Allen’s report on the history of California Rare Book School.

One omission from these proceedings was a keynote address, which, according to Pierre Delsaerdt’s Introduction, was given by Michael Suarez. As Director of the Rare Book School at the University of Virginia, Professor Suarez plays an integral role in the education of cultural heritage librarians—both within the United States and from abroad. His inclusion as a keynote speaker at the Antwerp conference supports this role, but his remarks are curiously absent from the book.

Overall, the book is not intended to be prescriptive or to culminate in a concise list of recommended competences for cultural heritage professionals. Rather, it is a series of contemplative essays by professionals on the educational and practitioner sides of the issue. As a result, it is not particularly effective for a student or aspiring professional who seeks recommendations for the knowledge and skills that he or she should develop to be successful in the field. It does, however, initiate a dialog to provide those stakeholders who may be in a bit more of an influential position to begin considering the skills needed to shape the next generation of cultural heritage professionals and the options available in educational programs to cultivate the necessary skills.—Jennifer K. Sheehan, University of North Texas.


This compilation of essays began as presentations at a symposium on ephemera in the long eighteenth century, held at the City University of New York Graduate Center in March 2009. The present collection, edited by Kevin D. Murphy and Sally O’Driscoll, seeks to reconceive and resituate the study of English eighteenth-century print ephemera, emphasizing how pervasive such materials were during