Michael F. Suarez and H.R. Woudhuysen, eds. *The Book: A Global History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. 672p. ISBN 9780199679416. \$50.00

The Book: A Global History is a tremendous reference work for anyone interested in the history of books, texts, and written communications. It is a more affordable iteration of 2010's *The Oxford Companion to the Book*, focusing on and updating the latter's article-length narratives of thematic and regional book histories, while excising its encyclopedia of terminology. In their introduction to *The Book: A Global History*, general editors Suarez and Woudhuysen explain that it emerged from their desire to further disseminate these essays created for *The Oxford Companion*. The book is sparingly illustrated, except in chapters that truly benefit from illustration, such as "The Technologies of Print." This also helps to keep the price down. While *The Oxford Companion* is a better purchase for institutional collections, *The Book: A Global History* is an excellent resource for librarians, archivists, and anyone else interested in the history of the book.

However, *The Book: A Global History* is more than just the history of the book. The collection functions as an introduction to the history of written communication across time and space. The book's essays are organized into two main categories: themes and regional histories. Individual scholars with specific expertise on the topic write the essays on each theme and region. The thematic section has a broad scope, including a range of topical essays on writing systems, transformations of written texts, print technologies, publishing, controlling the dissemination of information, as well as essays on paper, bookbinding, illustration, and ephemera. Many themes are addressed, and the flow is not necessarily intuitive, so a reader should not expect a clear narrative flow across themes. In some cases, it is not apparent why particular specialized topics were chosen (such as children's books), while others were not (such as music books). However, the overall coverage is usefully broad. The chapters on the economics of print and how they changed over time, and on literary censorship across ages and authorities, were especially valuable to me.

The regional section contains national and, more broadly, regional histories, with multiple sections on Britain separated by eras (early modern, the nineteenth century, and after the start of World War I). As one might expect given the discipline, the English-speaking world, and Britain in particular, is given more comprehensive coverage. The essays on national histories tend to cover Western countries, while the regional histories generally encompass multiple non-Western nations, though China, Japan, and Korea all have individual chapters. The chapters I found the most useful were precisely those that covered regional and national histories with which I was not familiar, such as those focusing on Asia as well as the chapter on the Caribbean and Bermuda, the latter not found in *The Oxford Companion*. Special collec-

tions professionals may find the regional histories the most useful as we endeavor to learn more about, contextualize, and share the varied histories of the materials in our care. Indeed, it will be interesting to see if and how geographical coverage might change in future editions of this book.

The chapters are organized for ease of reference. Each begins with a mini table of contents, helping the reader determine what topics are included and where to find them, and ends with short bibliographies for further reading. These paratextual elements allow those new to a particular theme or regional history to use the book as a starting point. This is not to say, however, that a reader could not happily bolster his or her knowledge or read the book cover to cover, as this reviewer has done. Choose your own adventure, friends.—*Shannon K. Supple, University of California, Berkeley*