

*Introduction to Public Librarianship*, Second Edition, by Kathleen de la Peña McCook. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2011.

reviewed by Mark Hudson

When the first edition of Kathleen de la Peña McCook's *Introduction to Public Librarianship* was published in 2005, it filled a great void in the scholarly and practical literature of the field, and it remains the most rigorous, comprehensive and thoughtful overview available on the subject. In that first edition, McCook articulated a vision of the public library as a community-building institution, dedicated to sustaining and expanding the public sphere by developing diverse collections, programs and services that promote reflective reading and lifelong learning and thus empower poor, working-class and culturally excluded people to enter the dialogue of the commons. McCook traced the philosophical shift regarding collection development and intellectual freedom from the First World War, during which librarians in the United States willingly engaged in the censorship of pacifist, antiwar, and German-language materials, to the period following the Second World War, when the profession made the transition to an ethical position defined at its core by an abstract commitment to the ideals of intellectual freedom.

The second edition is significantly expanded and enhanced by the addition of numerous new sources published since 2005. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 (Structure and Infrastructure, Adult Services, and Youth Services) in particular have been greatly augmented and to a large extent completely rewritten. Chapter 12 ("The Future of Public Libraries in the Twenty-First Century: Human Rights and Human Capabilities," co-authored with Katharine J. Phenix) is completely new, and it is this chapter that most compellingly articulates McCook's vision of a transformative public librarianship that goes beyond an abstract defense of intellectual freedom toward an unequivocal commitment to social justice and human emancipation.

McCook and Phenix predict that U.S. public librarians in the twenty-first century will begin to develop service models and employ language reflecting universal human rights values. The connections between public library practice and human rights concepts have long been an integral part of global library discourse but have remained implicit and submerged in U.S. public library philosophy. In an interconnected global society, however, this is likely to change, and U.S. public librarians will increasingly be guided by a commitment to universal human rights and the free development of human capabilities. Access to knowledge, the right to receive and disseminate ideas and information, the right to participate in cultural life, and the protection and promotion of cultural expression and linguistic diversity are some of the principles that will expand our thinking about public library service in the twenty-first century.

McCook and Phenix provide grounds for optimism about the future of public librarianship, but there are strong countervailing forces that could lead to a very different outcome for the profession. U.S. public libraries stand at a dangerous crossroads. Will we continue to embrace a technology-driven business model that marginalizes human and social concerns and strives to emulate chain bookstores and e-commerce, or will we remain true to the best ideals of the profession and an expanded commitment to social justice, human rights and human emancipation? Library workers and educators who choose the latter will find no text more indispensable than the second edition of *Introduction to Public Librarianship*.