

A Social History of Books and Libraries from Cuneiform to Bytes

By Patrick M. Vaelentine. (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc, 2012).

Reviewed by Kathleen de la Peña McCook

I recommend *A Social History of Books and Libraries from Cuneiform to Bytes*. It is always a fine experience to add a new book to the ambitious roster of sweeping histories that have shaped thinking about library development.¹ This book takes an interesting approach with an emphasis on the context of social and cultural factors.

However, Dr. Valentine's book continues as do other over-arching histories — he provides a male majority focus. In *A Social History of Books and Libraries*, once again, It's a Man's Man's Man's World.² Each chapter begins with a series of quotes that lead you on. Valentine cites Francis Bacon, Thomas Carlyle, Umberto Eco, R. David Lankes, José Saramago, Martin Schrettinger, Don Heinrich Tolzmann, Timothy Wu and 26 other men whose observations expand and extend the ideas presented in the *History*. I looked in vain for evidence or impact of Dr. Suzanne Hildenbrand's important volume, *Reclaiming the American Library Past: Writing the Women in*. It isn't even included in the bibliography.

Like Dr. Valentine I teach library history. Because the comprehensive histories like his or those cited in endnote number one (below) fail to include the role of women and the development of libraries serving groups outside the mainstream, I must supplement extensively. Men seem to be the gender to take on the entire sweep of the history of libraries. Until a woman does so there will continue to be a single-sex version of the development of libraries. I recommend this book with many supplements.³

■ Kathleen de la Peña McCook is distinguished university professor, University of South Florida, School of Information in Tampa where she teaches the “History of Libraries,” “Public Librarianship” and “Human Rights and Librarians.” She is a member of the Progressive Librarians Guild Coordinating Committee.

NOTES

1. Battles, Matthew. *Library: An Unquiet History*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2003.
Harris, Michael H. *History of Libraries in the Western World*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1995.
Hessel, Alfred. *Geschichte Der Bibliotheken: Ein Überblick Von Ihren Anfängen Bis Zur Gegenwart*. Göttingen: Hochschulverlag, g.m.b.h, 1925.
Jackson, Sidney L. *Libraries and Librarianship in the West: a Brief History*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974.
Lerner, Frederick A. *The Story of Libraries: From the Invention of Writing to the Computer Age*. New York: Continuum, 1998.
Murray, Stuart. *The Library: An Illustrated History*. New York, NY: Skyhorse Pub, 2009.
2. James Brown and Betty Jean Newsome. "It's a Man's Man's Man's World." King, 1966.
3. American Library Association, Committee on the Status of Women in Librarianship. *On Account of Sex*, 1984, 1989, 1993, 2000.
McCook, Kathleen de la Peña (ed.) "Ethnic Diversity in Library and Information Science." *Library Trends* 49, 1 (Summer 2000.)
Graham, Patterson T. *A Right to Read: Segregation and Civil Rights in Alabama's Public Libraries, 1900-1965*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002.
Hildenbrand, Suzanne. *Reclaiming the American Library Past: Writing the Women in*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Pub, 1996.
Watson, Paula D. "Founding Mothers: The Contribution of Women's Organizations to Public Library Development in the United States." *Library Quarterly* 64 (July, 1994): 233-369.