In *Which Side Are You On?: Seven Social Responsibility Debates in American Librarianship, 1990-2015*, former American Library Association (ALA) Councilor-at-Large, Social Responsibilities Round Table coordinator, and Progressive Librarian Guild Coordinating Council member Elaine Harger portrays in extensive detail seven social responsibility (or justice) debates that have occurred within the ALA over the past thirty years. Each of the seven debates—a wide-ranging list including debates regarding the ALA’s association with McDonalds and the Boy Scouts of America to reac-

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tion towards the anti-apartheid “book boycott” movement—is given its own chapter, with Harger moving chronologically from what gave rise to the debate through to its aftermath. The book concludes with a discussion on environmentalism and with Harger’s own draft resolution calling for the ALA to take actions towards an immediate reduction in CO2 emissions. In doing so, Which Side Are You On raises questions regarding the roles librarians play in society; how the need for intellectual freedom in libraries interacts (and often counteracts) the need to be socially responsive to the communities that librarians serve; and, in the end, how the librarians of today’s society will act when faced with such conflicts.

Harger’s book is very timely. The past several years has seen many of the questions and issues raised in Which Side Are You On become more prominent within both the professional fields of librarian, archival, and museum sciences, as well as within the public while the political climate in the United States of America has grown more polarized. These seven case studies then provide a strong basis and entryway for newer librarians in the field who have yet to encounter this history but increasingly must address discussions framed by them. It is not a large leap, for example, from the discussion in Chapter 1 regarding the ALA’s role in creating, airing, and reviving the infamous 1977 film The Speaker, to the current ongoing debate regarding the American Library Association’s meeting room policy. To have them discussed in the level of thoughtful detail that Harger, as a witness or participant in all seven debates (pg.3), only makes the reading more engaging and thought-provoking as the personal impact of these debates becomes all the more apparent from someone who was there to live them.

This is not the only way Which Side Are You On is an invaluable text. Harger also provides a rare glimpse into how the ALA itself operates, detailing at length both the social history surroundings movements within the ALA and the maneuvering of its varied committee and council members. This record may be of great help for lower-ranking members whose only interactions with the ALA are through its listservs and who are seeking to gain a greater understanding of the procedures the ALA follows in bringing and voting on measures. Perhaps the best example of this is Chapter 5’s discussion of the almost-passed Resolution in Support of Whistleblower Edward Snowden, a lengthy account that features not only the text as proposed and revised, but excerpts of the transcript of the debate along with the voting records of each participant. While it may seem slow going, the methodical description certainly helps to highlight who says what, and what may be influencing the figures in the discussion.

This is not to say that Which Side Are You On is flawless. Newer librarians may wonder how a book that manages to include and raise
discussions on issues regarding race, sexuality, religion, political power, corporate power, privacy, and environmentalism somehow doesn’t have similar case studies that prominently discuss issues of gender, immigration, and technology, as these last three issues are among those that today make headline news on a regular basis. Librarians with less familiarity with these social issues in a broader context may also question the framework around some of the discussions. For example, Chapter 3’s discussions of the ALA’s response to the censorship of news reports by the Israeli government likely requires a far deeper understanding of the intricacies of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the United States’ role in it, in order to fully appreciate the distinctions Harger draws. Yet neither of these are particularly off-setting weaknesses: the absence of discussions regarding the immigrant crisis and the #MeToo movement is understandable as the book came out in 2016, and Harger does an admirable job in orienting readers to the more complex social issues through recounting her own experiences and citing to additional reference works. More importantly, that these are perhaps the only notable weaknesses to the book speaks strongly to how much work Harger has spent in creating an account a layperson can engage with, as well as how well a follow-up work would be received.

Which Side Are You On then is a strong text, encompassing major debates and stances that librarians have engaged with from the past thirty years. The information is invaluable and approachable, and the book clearly meets Harger’s stated goal in using the debates to illustrate “the manner in which hegemonies of power are challenged, reproduced, reinforced, and altered within a professional association; and make a small contribution to the historic record of the American Library Association” (pg. 3). Well-written, Which Side Are You On should be recommended to all those seeking to understand better the current social responsibility debates within the profession, how they may better engage with these matters, and what kinds of responses they might face.