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Letter from Oklahoma-Catalogs from Publishers

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The very name North Carolina makes me wistful and homesick, and I get a special pleasure when I run across a publisher's catalogue from North Carolina. Imagine my feelings as I gazed at four 1996 catalogs, all from my home state: Parkway Publishers, Inc. (Boone); McFarland & Company (Jefferson); Algonquin Books (Chapel Hill), and the North Carolina Division of Archives and History.


For each title there is a brief description of the book, a note on the author, and quotes from reviews when available. There are photographs, too, including a charming one of Juanita Brown Tobin in her scarf and beret. "Juanita Tobin, who was born in 1915, lives in Blowing Rock, North Carolina in a cottage built by her grandparents on land bartered for with a pump organ in 1896. These poems and stories reflect her life: childhood, life with a man named Simon, her work with patients at Dorothea Dix Hospital in Raleigh, North Carolina, and retirement." I can't afford or justify buying for myself all of the titles in this eclectic list, but Ms. Tobin's book speaks to me from afar and costs only $14.95.

The McFarland catalog is for its new books, fall 1996. This is a wonderful list but only one book in particular caught my eye. Earlier in the day of this writing, I read in the Sunday New York Times (November 24, 1996) about the Jewish books residing in the National Library of Lithuania. They have been uncovered and are being cataloged and filmed (newspapers and periodicals, only) at a slow pace amidst a debate about what to do with them, keep them there in dismal conditions where use will be low, or move them to New York City or Jerusalem where they will receive better care and heavier use. McFarland has published Hunger for the Printed Word: Books and Libraries in the Jewish Ghetto in Nazi-Occupied Europe, by David Shavit, a librarian at Northern Illinois State University in DeKalb. These cultural treasures have survived the Nazis and the Soviet communists. "This work details the story of libraries in five of the largest ghettos in Nazi-occupied Europe: Lodz and Warsaw in Poland, Lvov and Vilna in Lithuania and Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia."

You'll learn from this catalog that no African Americans were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor during World War II as a matter of policy, The Exclusion of Black Soldiers from the Medal of Honor in World War II, by Elliot V. Converse and others tells this sordid tale. "Based on this very work, the U.S. Army forwarded in May 1996 the names of seven African Americans to Congress and the White House as potential recipients of the Medal of Honor."

How about these titles, on facing pages: Behind the G-String: An Exploration of the Stripper's Image, Her Person and Her Meaning by David A. Scott and Santa Claus, Last of the Wild Men: The Origins and Evolution of Saint Nicholas, Spanning 5,000 Years by Phyllis Sieffer. I don't know which one to read first. With Christmas so close, I should probably learn more about that jolly old elf, a.k.a. the Wild Thing. There is no photograph or illustration accompanying the G string (wasn't that a piece by Bach?) but we are treated to a drawing of "Dutch Santa, 1848," a pipe-smoking fellow in a fur cap, buckle shoes, and a bag of presents. He has a beard, too, and may be dressed all in red, but we will have to colorize this particular picture if we are to see red.


I do not know the people at McFarland and slightly know the publishers at Parkway but regardless of familiarity, I am sure that neither house is in the publishing business

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Tom Gilson

Born: Brooklyn, NY, December 21. I was just over 5 pounds, but you'd never know it now.

Educated: I got my BA in general history from St. John Fisher College, Rochester, NY. My library degree came from SUNY Buffalo. I have a second masters in Public Administration which was a joint degree from the College of Charleston and the University of South Carolina.

Jobs: My first professional job was as a reference librarian at Greenville (SC) Public Library. Later I became Head of the Arts and AV department there and, still later, Director of Oconee County Public Library in the northern part of SC. When I moved to Charleston to get my MPA, I was lucky enough to become a reference librarian and then Head of Reference Services at the College of Charleston Libraries.

After many years (23) as a reference librarian: I am struck by the dramatic increase in the required knowledge base to do an effective job. What we do is getting more and more complex and we are becoming more essential and valuable. But we still seem to be making the same salaries!

Family: A daughter (21) who is now in nursing school. Recently married to Carol, an accomplished artist who teaches language arts in middle school. Also a dog Sally and a cat Revis.

Hobbies: Back-packing and attempting to play the guitar. Also I get a dose of cross-country skiing every year when I visit my sister, husband and two kids in Denver, Colorado.

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in order to perform miracles to store away against beaification in the future. But a look at the titles in their lists and I am reassured that there are publishers in business who personally care about their authors and their books. I suspect that the same applies to the next two publishers, even though Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill is a division of Workman Publishing in New York, and the Historical Publications Section of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History is part of the Department of Cultural Resources. The lists of these two houses speak well of Workman and the Tarheel State, sometimes known as the Old North State.

The North Carolina catalog is 1/2 inch narrower than Parkway's but standing up they are head to toe the same height. It contains sections on the Civil War (the War Between the States), rosters of North Carolina troops from 1861-1865 (both of my families are represented on those rolls), Coastal North Carolina (Triumph at Kitty Hawk: The Wright Brothers and Powered Flight by Thomas C. Farramore), North Carolina's African American Heritage (The Black Experience in North Carolina by Jefrey J. Crow), and Life and Culture in North Carolina (A History of Sports in North Carolina by Jim L. Summer and The Textile Industry in North Carolina: A History by Brent D. Glass) to name but a few.

In addition to its regularly catalog of publications, Algonquin Books also issues a wonderful series called The Algonkian. If you have never seen it, write to Algonquin Books at P.O. Box 2225, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-2225. "The Algonkian is a small periodical about books, authors, and publishing, prepared from time to time for the friends of Algonquin and any others who might take joy in it.... The Algonkian is distributed gratis to such as care to receive it by Workman Publishing, 708 Broadway, New York, NY 10003." Thank you, Workman Publishing. More about The Algonkian at another time.

The Algonquin catalog is 8 1/2 x 11' and features a cover illustration by Pat Scheible — an overflowing bowl of fruit with two trumpet blowing angels above and to either side. It looks like fall to me. You might expect to find books about North Carolina or by North Carolinians in this catalog and sure enough, the first book listed is Jill McCorkle's Carolina Moon. "Its geographical setting is the part of eastern North Carolina I grew up in, a town that is near both the ocean and a river." This is how Jill McCorkle describes her fifth (and latest) novel. For the full story and a picture of Ms. McCorkle, see pages 17-19 in the June 1996 issue of The Algonkian, the one with a picture of Blind Lemon Jefferson on the cover.

Algonquin also publishes the fiction of Chapel Hill resident Lee Smith and features her The Christmas Letters: A Novella, also described in the Blind Lemon Jefferson issue of The Algonkian and there is a picture of Ms. Smith there, too. In this same issue of the Algonquin fall catalog is another Christmas book, Let Us Now Praise Christmas Cooking: A Reminiscence and a Recipe by Camille Glen. The catalog entry lists a few of the recipes by name only: Oyster and Clam Chowder, Easy Bread Sticks, Colonial Gingerbread, Tangerine Sherbet and Winter Crystal Cookies, Creole Shrimp with Rice, and New Orleans Madeleines. On page 31 of the June 1996 Algonkian there is a full recipe from the book, for "Four Star Cornmeal Butterflake Biscuits."

Algonquin's fall 1996 list also includes Yak Butter and Black Tea: A Journey into Forbidden China by Wade Brackenbury, 100 Flowers and How They Got Their Names, by Diana Wells, Illustrations by Ippy Patterson. Good Bugs For Your Garden, written and illustrated by Allison Mia Starcher, and The Emperor's Virtual Clothes: continued on page 78
Accreditation Game
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user-friendly manner and when Internet access is reliable. Recognition of the ease of use of electronic resources is growing and accreditors are increasingly sensitive to the large-scale financial commitment to these resources on the part of libraries. Accreditation teams also seem to be growing in sensitivity to libraries’ need to conserve space and funds and they are not opposed to the notion of document delivery and full-text online access to journals, provided that the access is user-friendly and reliable.

Conclusion

Regardless of the academic discipline under review, accreditation agencies consistently look for these components when evaluating departments: the range and depth of subjects offered; departmental and campus-wide computer and tutorial facilities; specialty areas, research, teaching, and service work among the teaching faculty; library facilities. Regarding specific library components, accreditors examine the overall range of library services, the accessibility of the library and its collections (including hours that the library is open and staffing levels), and relevancy and currency of library collections.

Bottom Line

The most important factor is for the entire campus to showcase itself as a unified, mutually informed whole when presenting its programs to the visiting accreditation teams. Evaluators cannot help but be impressed by high levels of cooperation and the library’s true understanding of the knowledge base for which the department under review is responsible. And, customized packaging of library resources shows a keen level of preparedness. A well-organized campus with a high degree of inter-departmental cooperation sends a positive message to visitors — as powerfully as the quality of the program itself. 😊

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Naked Truth about Internet Culture, by Dinty W. Moore. The Internet book is actually from the backlist but you see by it the variety of titles that Algonquin carries, too, not just Southern fiction, although that would not be a bad line to get stuck in.

And as if this isn’t enough to make the heart start pining for home, the husband of a second cousin has got me listening to WTOP (Winston-Salem, North Carolina) on the World Wide Web <http://www.wtop.com>.

Back Talk
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Ward Shaw announced that he is interested in finding some major research libraries which would be willing to let him market access to their contents. This is only the beginning. Some will view this kind of cooperation as an anathema to the goals of higher education, others will look upon it as the democratization of information access at last. I am in the latter camp. By the way, Ward isn’t the devil but I thought it might cause you to read this last sound byte.

Cooperation is not dead. It lives in new clothes. 😊

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