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Book Reviews -- Monographic Musings

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From the Reference Desk
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erence that will appeal to interested readers as well as serious scholars. Written by David
Garrett Izzo and published by McFarland this
book offers easy access to details about Auden's
life, his influences, his ideas and his literary
accomplishments.

Perhaps best known for his poetry, the Ency-
clopedia makes it clear that Auden was also
an accomplished librettist, playwright and
essayist. At the forefront of the so-called "Audes
Generation" he was identified with writers like
Christopher Isherwood and Stephen
Spender, writers whose impact on 20th cen-
tury letters is also chronicled in this volume.
Of course, there are biographical sketches of
other contemporary writers and thinkers who
occupied Auden's world. Entries range from
Joey and Eliot to Maugham and Housman
and from Freud and Jung to Kierkegaard
and Gerald Heard. There is also coverage of
influences like William Blake, Goethe and
Voltaire, as well as people who figured promi-


From evidence in prehistoric settlements to
the latest in cookware and modern appliances,
the kitchen has been an essential part of domestic
life. With the Encyclopedia of Kitchen History
(2004, 1579583806, $175), Fitzroy
Dearborn and veteran reference book writer
Mary Ellen Snodgrass offer a work that pro-

vides interesting historical perspectives on one
of the most popular parts of anyone’s home.
In a straightforward alphabetical arrange-
ment of more that 300 articles this book cov-
er a variety of topics from the development of
kitchen storage devices like cabinets, cup-
boards and canisters to various cooking styles
from barbecue to frying to stone boiling.
There are also articles on the history of staple
foods like honey, rice, bananas, coconut,
breads, nuts, spices, oil and wine. Various
cookware innovations like mixers and blende-
ers, pyrex, and Teflon coating are also in-
cluded as are biographical sketches of famous
cooks like Julia Child and Charles Beard
and food processing innovators like Clarence
Birdseye and the Kellogg brothers.

Snodgrass seems to concentrate on the history
of the European and American kitchen.
Although they are referenced in a number of
texts, one wishes that there was more direct
coverage of other cultures. While there are ar-
ticles on American Colonial Kitchens and Vic-
torian Kitchens there are no articles on African
or Mideast kitchens. On the plus side, the book
is attractive and uses black and white photos
and images to complement the text and each
article has a brief list of further reading. There
is also a serviceable general index and useful
"see also" references. However, there is no topi-
cal index or guide.

Despite the reservations noted above, En-
cyclopedia of Kitchen History should have appeal,
especially to public libraries. For larger
reference collections it would supplement
Scribner’s recent Dartmouth Medal winner,
Encyclopedia of Food and Culture (2004,
0684805685, $400) as well other standard
sources like the O (1999 0192115790, $65) and
the Co Ho (0521402166, $210). (These last two
titles can be purchased together from Amazon
at significant savings.)

Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

Column Editor: Debbie Vaughn (Reference Librarian, College of Charleston)
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Column Editor’s Note: The natural environment and a library’s
online environment are in different spheres; however reviewer Bur-
ton Callicott and I take a look at books detailing these separate fields
in this month’s column. Happy reading, everyone! — DV

Williams, Michael. Deforesting the Earth: From Prehistory
0226899268. 715 pages. $70.00.

Reviewed by Burton Callicott (Reference Librarian,
College of Charleston) <callicottb@cofc.edu>

Being rather masochistic when it comes to environmental issues,
my eyes naturally settled on Michael Williams’ Deforesting the
Earth: from Prehistory to Global Crisis in the pile of ATG review
books in my editor’s ofifice. Though I have long since accepted
the idea of an impending environmental apocalypse, I continue to
embrace my fragile psyche with more and more information in support
of a doomsday scenario. With substantial evidence of increased glo-
bal warming and ever increasing species extinction, it is not hard
to find such support. Expecting to tuck into a heaping helping of stag-
sagging and depressing facts relating to our quickly deteriorating for-
est, mixed with a good diatribe on the coming end of the world as we
know it, I was surprised to uncover a more complicated and sober
account of human interaction with the forest beginning with the re-
treat of the last ice age to the 1990s. Rather than simply outline the
ways that white Western men have destroyed the earth’s fragile eco-
system in increasingly industrious and insidious ways, this book takes
a more protracted and encompassing approach. Using pollen counts, soil
samples, and loads of documentation, Willia m outlines the ways that humans
have had a profound effect on forests since “the dawn of time.” Being a white
Western man myself, I was somewhat relieved and took strange con-
fort when I read that in AD 900 Maoiris destroyed almost half of the
forests in New Zealand in an effort to hunt the Moa, “a large, ostrichlike,
flightless bird.” “The mixed broadleaf-conifer forests [of New Zealand] (dominant species, Nothofagus and Podocarpus vari-
eties) were completely destroyed,” Williams writes. “By the mid-
thirteenth century a mere 8,000-12,000 people in South Island had
destroyed not less than 8 million acres of forest and driven the Moa to
the verge of extinction.” Though providing no hope in terms of the
Earth’s future, knowing that our current crisis is not solely the fault of
my tribe assuages my inherited guilt to some degree.

Like most people, I grew up with the myth propagated by Thoreau
and others that when Europeans landed in “The New World” they
confronted a “virgin” landscape untouched by human hands and that
the people that were inhabiting the country were living in perfect
harmony with nature. This book deftly shatters this myth. Though
Native Americans did not have chain saws or even metal axes, they
did have a profound impact on the land and the size, shape, and type
of forests in the Americas as did native peoples in every continent:
“When the Europeans came to North America, the forest had already
been changed radically. Their coming did not alter the processes at work
[clearing forests for farmland]; it was merely their superior numbers and
advanced technology that accomplished that.”

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<http://www.against-the-grain.com>
Book Reviews

A geographer by training and profession, Williams teaches at Oxford, where he has focused his recent scholarship on the environment and forests in particular. He is the author of *Americans and Their Forests* and he is the editor of *Wetlands: A Threatened Landscape*. From the vantage point of a geographer, Williams is able to knit together insights from various disciplines in order to present a very convincing and profound account of human interaction with Earth's forests. As equally well-versed in ecological and biological material as he is in social history and anthropology, Williams displays his breadth of knowledge and keen insight on every page: "The net ecological effect [of repeated man-made fires] was to replace the high, mixed deciduous forest with a mosaic of open-canopy woodland with grassy clearings near water resources, the ideal hunting ground."

Though it is filled with technical terms as well as many maps, charts, and tables that, for a lay reader such as myself, are sometimes oblique, this is still an extremely readable and captivating book. The research that went into this book is dizzying; there are over 150 pages of notes as well as an extensive index, yet Williams wields this secondary material deftly and fluidly. The book is suitable, and in my opinion recommended, for an academic library, public library, and even a personal library in some cases. With its subject being the world’s forests, and its time frame spanning the Ice Age to the modern age, one could easily assume that Williams has bitten off more than he can chew. However, as the reader follows Williams around the world and through time, he is able to grow and state larger thematic points that realize the ambitious scope of the monograph.

Deforestation is associated with four kinds of motives or forces, though in reality the forces of change are more varied and less clear-cut than this, and they tend to operate in varying combinations to produce clearing:

1. Agricultural expansion, associated with population increase/settlement resulting in either planned or spontaneous colonization schemes...in Amazonia, Indonesia, and Malaysia.
2. Ranching and pasture development are significant in Central and Latin America.
3. Fuelwood gathering is most important in Africa and to a lesser extent in India.
4. Logging is noteworthy in South and Southeast Asia, and of declining importance in West Africa.

There is plenty in this book to scare the pants off anyone at all concerned about the environment and the ecological health of the planet. Yet, a reader will find a truly fair and balanced, not to mention fascinating, "account of how humans have related to their forests over the last seven millennia."


Reviewed by Debbie Vaughn (College of Charleston)

The American Library Association has recently published two books regarding the creation and design of library Websites. As the head of our own library Web team, I was naturally interested in both books for their potential professional enlightenment qualities. Our team has implemented three site overhauls since the inception of our library Website; with each edition we have tried to move closer to the "perfect design"—one that is user-friendly with edutactive properties (we do not want to promote the "dumbing" of our students). We recently conducted a Web site usability study and are in the process of organizing a focus group to help us learn the strengths and weaknesses of our current site’s aesthetics and architecture. All of this is being done in preparation for our fourth site overhaul, which we hope to complete by August. As I read *Susanna Davidson* and Everyly Yankee's *Web Site Design with the Patron in Mind*, I was awestruck by its helpfulness to my work endeavors; I did not think it possible that any other book could match its value. When I opened *A. Paula Wilson’s Library Web Sites: Creating Online Collections and Services*, I found the match: another thought-provoking guide for improving your library site.

**Web Site Design** focuses on the process of creating (or recreating) your library’s Web site. Karen G. Schneider, coordinator of Librarians’ Index to the Internet and American Libraries columnist, provides the book’s forward dripping with complements about Davidson and Yankee. Such praises are certainly warranted; Davidson has been instrumental in online library services for over a decade, and Yankee has been an interface designer and usability consultant for more than twenty years. **Web Site Design** is divided into ten chapters, each of which has elements that build on information presented in the previous chapter. All facets of Web design—from the site mission to evaluation—are touched upon. Each chapter begins by outlining the purpose of the chapter and ends with a checklist of questions to consider. This style of preview-and-review allows the book’s content to sink in and encourages readers to connect the authors’ advice with their own design processes.

Davidson and Yankee’s book is not specific to academic, public, or special libraries. The bulk of the information in the book is broad enough to be adapted by any library type; however, helpful examples of redesign issues are presented from each library type. Vision statements, checklists, and even screen shots are offered to give readers concrete models of others’ processes. Davidson and Yankee bestow hand-holding without smothering; they give readers just the right amount of information to get them through the design process without stifling creativity or undermining an individual library’s unique online presence.

While *Web Site Design* centers on (re)design strategies and procedures, *Wilson’s Library Web Sites: Creating Online Collections and Services* surveys library Web sites and how they can provide patron access to a multitude of resources. Two introductory chapters cover site planning, architecture, and navigation. The next chapter explores the library brand of information and how an online presence ties in with library marketing. Each of the subsequent five chapters focus on online library resources and services: digital reference collections, the catalog, databases and eBooks, RA and discussion groups, and content and programs for specific audiences. Wilson closes her work with a thought-provoking chapter that raises the question "Where do we go from here?"

**Library Web Sites** provides a detailed overview—an annotated checklist, if you will—of everything we can do to meet patrons’ online needs. Though your library Website might not offer each service covered in Wilson’s book, it provides an unparalleled overview of online possibilities and the steps to take to make them realities.

Both books are valuable assets for library Web teams. **Library Web Sites** have become the primary point of contact for most library patrons, making it imperative that we offer a clear gateway to our collections and to the services we provide. As the price of computers and Internet service continue to decrease, an increasing number of people are demanding that library services such as materials renewal, periodical research (and full-text article access), and even reference assistance be available online. **Web Site Design** and **Library Web Sites** are first-rate handbooks to aid in your library’s online endeavors.

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**Future Dates for Charleston Conferences**

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