Charleston Conference Future Dates

Editor

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Recommended Citation
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4463

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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 sources, 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 simple, 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 resettlement 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."

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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 educative 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 Everal Yankee's Web Site Design with the Patron in Mind, I was awed-struck 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 Website.

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 compliments 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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