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Book Reviews: Monographic Musing

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Students of American folk music will welcome a recent publication from **Greenwood**. Authored by **Norm Cohen**, *American Folk Songs: a Regional Encyclopedia* (2008, 978-0313340475, $149.95) is a two-volume set that provides the lyrics along with the historical context for 487 folk songs from across the country.

In defining folksongs, **Cohen** takes "the perspective that these are songs that survive in the community without the need for commercial media." They are songs that are "perpetuated by transmission from person to person or community to community by noncommercial means (generally orally, but other media can serve.)" According to **Cohen**, the songs collected here all fit under these criteria at one time or another.

Divided by region the set works its way westward thus showing a chronological development by default. The first volume covers New England, Midland (North Atlantic) the Upper South and the Deep South and the Ozarks. The second volume moves steadily west discussing the Great Lakes, Midwest Plains, Southwest, Mountain Region and the Far West and the Pacific. These broad regions are divided by individual states and then within the states the songs are presented chronologically. However, the set does not contain individual entries as such. These regional sections take the form of long essays with subheadings for each state covered. Each of these state sections provides the lyrics of songs accompanied by its historical context as well as a discussion of the origins and the dissemination history of the song. In fact, one of the features of the set is the reprinting of some of the original broadsides uses to circulate the songs. These help illustrate the *Encyclopedia* as well as provide a nice historical touch. A variety of song types are covered including war songs, those that center on historical events, tragedies and disasters, songs in praise of the state or its inhabitants, songs about local crimes or criminals and ethnic songs. The vast majority are in English although there are a few Spanish language songs, especially in the Southwest and Far West and Pacific sections. Providing access to the text is a song index as well as general index. The song index is alphabetical by title and points to the state and regional section where the song can be found, but oddly, not the page number. However, it does reference other sources where the songs are listed including **G. Malcolm Laws'** *Native American Balladry* and his *American Balladry from British Broadsides* as well as the **Roud Folksong Index**, an electronic folksong database maintained at *http://library.efdss.org/cgi-bin/query.cgi?query=*. In addition, the scholarly value of the set is also enhanced by the fairly extensive bibliographies that end each regional essay.

Some might argue that if the *American Folk Songs: a Regional Encyclopedia* has a drawback, it is the limited sense of the actual music or the tunes associated with the songs. But in the *Encyclopedia's* defense, the set is not intended as a songbook for performance. It will primarily be of interest to those students and scholars concerned with what these songs say about "the various turns of American culture and style." As **Mr. Cohen** himself notes it is historians, folklorists, musicologists and sociologists who will reap the greatest rewards from this work. As such, it is highly useful survey that will be equally at home on circulation shelves as it is in reference collections. It is a set worth considering by academic libraries as well as by larger public libraries where there is enough patron interest.

Facts on File adds to its *Almanacs of American Wars* series with the *Vietnam War Almanac* (2009, 978-0816071029, $95). Written by **James H. Willbanks**, the director of the Department of Military History at the **U.S. Army Command and General Staff College**, this works follows the successful lead of the prior titles in this series.

The bulk of this volume is devoted to a day by day chronology that enables the reader to trace America's involvement in Vietnam from the joint French-American advisory phase starting in 1950 through the American

Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

Column Editor: **Debbie Vaughn** (College of Charleston) <vaughnd@cofc.edu>

*Column Editor's Note: Libraries and librarians have had a complex relationship with **Google** since the Internet conglomerate's search engine grew in popularity about a decade ago. People's ability to easily peruse the World Wide Web has seemingly decreased the demand for librarians' assistance in the quest for information; however, the information available at one's fingertips has increased the need for assistance in organizing and sorting through the glut of information available to those very people. This paradox has been explored and editorialized in newspapers, trade publications, peer-reviewed journals, and books — including **Fool's Gold: Why the Internet is No Substitute for a Library**. How has **Google**, the most popular search engine, become practically synonymous with Internet searching? The verb "google" can even be found in the **OED**, and it seems that once a noun becomes so commonplace that it is used a verb (think: "networking," "scrapbooking," and — thanks to **Calvin** and **Hobbes**—"verbing"), then that noun/verb has potentially changed the course of history — or at least popular culture. It is fitting, then, that **Greenwood's** series **Corporations That Changed the World** should include **Google** in its ranks.*

*In this month's column, please welcome two new **ATG** reviewers. **Jolanda-Pieta van Arnhem (Joey)** has worked at the **College of Charleston** for about as long as **Google** has been around, first as an educational technologist and most recently as a library technologist. She completed her M.F.A. in Visual Arts with a specialization in visual culture studies at the **Vermont College of Fine Arts** in 2009. **Jolanda** is currently working with the College's Reference Librarians to expand the library's Information Literacy offerings into the social Web and online multimedia. She is also an adjunct professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology where she teaches Research Methods in Expressive Culture. **Jerry Spiller** completed his M.S.I.S at the **University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill** in 2004. With a background in language and culture studies as well as information design, he coordinates the **College of Charleston's Language Resource Center**, teaching workshops on information resources and designing the Websites for the School of Languages, Cultures and World Affairs. Happy reading, everyone! — DV*

Herring, Mark. *Fool's Gold: Why the Internet is No Substitute for a Library*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007. 9780786430826. 191 pages. $45.00.

Reviewed by **Jolanda-Pieta van Arnhem** (Library Technologist, College of Charleston Libraries) <vanarnhemj@cofc.edu>

Fool's Gold is a satirical expansion of **Dr. Herring's** ten talking points on why the Internet is no substitute for a library that became an article and a poster. **Dr. Herring** is the Dean of Libraries at **Winthrop University** in South Carolina. His book opens a larger discussion about the quality of knowledge that can be gained in a library versus what may seem a random collection of information found online. The discussion ex-

force build up and initial combat in the mid 1960's, to the large unit offensive expansion in 1967-69, to the Vietnamization and the American withdrawal in the early 1970s, and finally to the fall of Saigon in 1975. There is also a section of brief biographies covering the major players from **William Westmoreland** to **Ho Chi Minh** and from **Richard Nixon** to **General Vo Nguyen Giap**. Adding to the value of the book are a series of appendices that include information like the U.S. troop commitments by year, the military force commitments by America's allies, Allied casualties by year, specific U.S. military campaigns during the war, U.S. government expenditures on the war, troop withdrawals from 1969-1972, and Medal of Honor recipients. There is also a short section of useful maps as well as a selected bibliography and a helpful general index.

The *Vietnam War Almanac* is a handy and compact volume that will play multiple roles from finding a useful place on library reference and circulating shelves to supplementing the personal collections of students and scholars. In fact, anyone with a serious interest in the complexities America's experience in Vietnam will find this a fact filled and balanced compendium of valuable information. 🌳

plicates the issues that surround both the betterment and the drawbacks provided by the Web in library services. **Herring** presents the argument that a decline in teaching, as well as in reading, is resulting in an overall deterioration of literacy in today's society. This trend, along with the ubiquitous availability of information provided by **Google** and other search providers is fueling the potential for libraries to become obsolete as new generations of users fail to appreciate its services. There are comprehensive chapter notes for each chapter, along with lists of Web resources that illustrate the points and examples given in the text.

Herring notes the overwhelming amount of information available on the Web, pointing out the distinction between mere information and knowledge, which requires both the theoretical foundations and practical applications that human experience bring. He argues that libraries collect and organize knowledge, which the Web cannot do. He also points out the pitfalls of unregulated incursions of misinformation, fraud and predation possible on the Web. The dangers of sites run by hate groups or the possibility of identity theft are two examples he offers for the superiority of the library environment. Indeed, **Herring** makes frequent calls for Internet filtering in libraries, removing potentially pornographic

or offensive materials, and decries what he sees as the **ALA's** absolutist position on the First Amendment.

In a later chapter, "A Mile Wide and a Mind-Numbing Inch Deep," **Herring** offers that the Web as a modern repository is reflective of the cultural shift of today's "snap and grab" mentality, and that its short attention span and disregard for formality are having extremely harmful effects on the literacy of a rising generation. As a result, he argues that the historical record of our culture is being more truncated, and the only solution may be

getting more people to appreciate libraries' roles in preservation and access.

Herring espouses a point of view that is not uncommon in the debate about widespread perception of the Internet as a threat to the user base of libraries. This debate is not new, however it is ongoing. Regardless of the reader's ultimate assessment of the arguments presented in *Fool's Gold*, the work is valuable for inclusion in an academic library setting because the points **Herring** raises beg to be addressed.

Scott, Virginia. *Google. Corporations That Changed the World.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008. 9780313351273. 168 pages. $45.00.

Reviewed by **Jerry Spiller** (Information Specialist, Michael Pincus Language Resource Center, College of Charleston) <spillerj@cofc.edu>

After its inception as a research project of **Stanford** graduate students **Larry Page** and **Sergey Brin**, **Google** quickly rose to dominance over its competitors in Internet search. Educational consultant **Virginia Scott** relates the history and philosophy of the company in *Google*, part of the *Corporations That Changed the World* series from **Greenwood Press**. The hardback edition of the 168 page work was released in October of 2008.

Scott begins *Google* with an introduction to founders **Page** and **Brin**, and tells the story of how their collaborative project on information retrieval in the burgeoning Internet expanded into an incorporated search company that quickly became the leader in its field. **Scott** gives a brief overview of the World Wide Web of the 1990s, including major search engines of the time. She notes that it was **Google's** commitment to returning only the most relevant results, ranked by popularity, in a simple interface that clearly separated search results from paid advertisements that led to the company's nearly unbridled success. After the reader is presented in the early chapters with how **Google** got to the top, later chapters focus on **Google's** growth into other services and its corporate philosophy, including its uniquely open-ended work environment and commitment to philanthropic interests such as renewable energy, climate change and the improvement of local public services around the world.

The book is not overly technical in its approach to technology topics, nor are its investigations into the operations of the corporation very complex. Insets giving background on relevant topics help the general reader, from "What is a Terabyte?" to expositions of "Angel Investors" as opposed to other types of investors, such as venture capitalists. Endnotes accompany each chapter, and an appendix points the reader to further resources on various topics. Despite a short chapter on controversies surrounding **Google**, the overall tone of the book is light and uncritical. In fact, many of the endnote references come from **Google** itself, resources such as the "Corporate Philosophy" or "Top 10 Reasons to Work at Google" posted on the **Google** site.

Considering its light tone and easy reading, **Scott's** *Google* would seem to be most at home in a middle or perhaps high school library, or in the hands of the reader needing only a quick and simple overview of the corporation whose approach to information retrieval, as the *Corporations That Changed the World* series posits, changed the way we live. 🐦

Something to Think About — Has Technology Changed You?

Column Editor: **Mary E. (Tinker) Massey** (Serials Librarian, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Jack R. Hunt Library) <masse36e@erau.edu>

Sitting at my work computer, I think of my days without this higher technology. Starting to work at the **University of Florida** in 1963, there were no computers, no **Xerox** machines, no electric typewriters, no palm pilots, very few electric machines and nothing electronic. Our world was simpler, but very labor intensive. We were known by the work we did and what skills we used to complete those tasks. If you did binding, for instance, everyone knew that you retrieved materials from the periodical shelves, checked for paging, issues, indexes and completeness, made our slips either by hand or on the standard typewriter, tied the bundles for each binding, attached slips and boxed them for the bindery. Today, we have computer programs that create the slips for us and produce written reports that we circulate to our staff so they can assist patrons looking for the material. Technology hasn't found a way to collect the materials, attach the slips and box the materials, but the binderies use computer software to put the materials together and electronically sew or glue the materials into a "perfect" binding. Circulation has changed drastically over the years. There are no checkout cards any more that are filled out by hand. Our barcodes scanned by a machine will check the material out to the patron and we slide the book over demagnetizing heads to allow that patron to take the book from the building. When it comes back, we re-magnetize the material so that it will be safe again. My goodness, I can even remember a "twixing" machine that checked other libraries for materials our patrons wanted to use. The stuff was sent through the mails to our desk and we contacted our patrons to pick up their information. Sometimes this process took a week, sometimes a month to six weeks. Now, much of the material is sent electronically through a computer in a number of hours or a single day, and we have new systems that can scan the material and send it electronically. Reference is changing incredibly fast through electronic resources (CDs and databases). We still use print and microform sources, but the amount of information a reference person needs to do their job is amazing.

How have these changes in technology modified your personality and ultimately your identity to others? I have noticed in myself and others that there is less diversity in our knowledge of other library jobs and more dependence on our co-workers for answers to some basic problems. That makes us more unidirectional and less able to see a "big" picture. This, I believe, has created an isolation of the individual worker, greater dependence on others, and a frustration of impatience when we have to wait on the help we need. Sure, my job is a little easier from the use of computers and recorded archive of materials, with faster contact of external sources (namely vendors and publishers), but I have a great deal more to do, and must press myself to be constantly aware of more radical influences on my work and time. I actually look forward to the loss of electricity sometimes, to remind us that we can still do the jobs manually. I try not to become so dependent on the technologies, and yet, that is what we are doing. I no longer feel defined by my job or skills. In a way, I feel lost in the midst of the technology. I insist on doing human and humane things with my job, so that I don't lose my identity altogether. I'm old fashioned and have some trepidation around new technology, but I plow on, using the new resources to accomplish my job faster. I'm just not sure it's better. To that end, I feel guilty about using the new technology, but I am able to accomplish my job with some new methods and possibly more thoroughness. How about you? How has technology changed you and your attitudes in your job? It is "something" we should think about! 🐦

A similar article titled "Has the Advent of Technology Changed Your Identity?" was published in the March 2009 issue of Associates: an e-journal located at http://associates.ucr.edu/journal/?page_id=262.