December 2010

Book Reviews-Monographic Musings

Debbie Vaughn

College of Charleston, vaughnd@cofc.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>

Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Vaughn, Debbie (2010) "Book Reviews-Monographic Musings," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 22: Iss. 6, Article 21.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.5699>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

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

Column Editor's Note: Many thanks to this issue's *MM* reviewers, **Joey van Arnhem**, **Jerry Spiller**, and **Eleanor Cook**. Season's greetings and happy reading, everyone! — **DV**

Montgomery, Jack. *American Shamans: Journeys with Traditional Healers*. Ithaca, NY: Busca, Inc., 2008. 978-0-9666196-9-0. 304 pages. \$19.95.

Reviewed by **Jolanda-Pieta (Joey) van Arnhem, M.F.A.** (Instructor & Training Coordinator, College of Charleston Libraries) <vanarnhemj@cofc.edu> and

Jerry Spiller, M.S.I.S. (Professor, Web Design and Interactive Media, Art Institute of Charleston) <yeri.spiller@gmail.com>

In *American Shamans: Journeys with Traditional Healers*, **Jack Montgomery** relates detailed personal accounts of working with shamans and magical healers in the United States. The research leading up to this book began with Montgomery's undergraduate work in religious studies at the **University of South Carolina** in the mid-1970s. Many of his chronicles focus on healers in midland and Lowcountry South Carolina, near his hometown of Columbia and his alma mater. These detail encounters with root doctors or Hoodoo practitioners of African American traditions. His fieldwork also illuminates similar traditions of Powwow men or hexenmeisters coming out of German immigrant traditions in South Carolina and Pennsylvania.

Montgomery offers his firsthand ethnographic research, giving insight into classic ethnographic methodologies including journal writing, tape recording interviews for later transcription and analysis, and the tenuous process of building relationships with potential informants whose names may require disguising for their privacy and protection. The author himself works as a shaman and spiritual healer, and is often more a participant than observer in the tales. He spends some time remarking on the need for holistic approaches to societal as well individual strife. He asks the reader to keep an open mind with regard to his subject matter, calling for openness to the often different, even opposing, worldviews of science and the various faith healing traditions.

Researched histories of traditions in South Carolina and Pennsylvania, given further context by **Montgomery's** commentary, provide a cultural background for the author's recounted fieldwork and numerous short anecdotes about noted healers. The reader will be entranced by such remarkable and charismatic figures as **Doctor Buzzard**, high sheriff **James E. McTeer**, **Granny Slice**, and **Conrad Matthai**. Perhaps the most exceptional and rewarding passages of his research are transcriptions of interviews with South Carolina Powwow man and retired

professor **Lee Raus Gandee**, **Montgomery's** own spiritual teacher, and a Virginia granny-woman whom we know by the pseudonym **Sarah Ramsey**.

American Shamans will be appealing to readers with interests in the magical and religious healing practices, as well those focused on anthropological fieldwork or local histories of areas covered. The book may be of particular interest to those researching American folk practices, especially the traditions explored by **Montgomery**: African American root doctors in the South and Powwow healers in areas of German settlement throughout the Eastern states. *American Shamans*, with its fascinating narratives, is a relatively quick read at 261 pages. The book includes an introduction by the author as well as an appendix of German Powwow terms. *American Shamans* is published by **Busca, Inc.**

No Shelf Required: E-Books in Libraries, ed. **Sue Polanka**. Chicago: ALA, 2011. 978-0-8389-1054-2. 200 pages. \$65.00.

Reviewed by **Eleanor I. Cook** (Assistant Director for Collections and Technical Services, Joyner Library, East Carolina University)

This book captures a moment in time and does a good job of documenting the evolving nature of eBooks. Unfortunately, because of the fact that the ground is constantly shifting, some of what is described here may already be out-of-date. One of the book's strengths is that it collects information about how different types of libraries are experimenting with eBooks. It also covers issues related to eBook vendors, standards, and presents specific case studies. Preservation concerns are also addressed.

The case studies are of particular interest as they get at the thought processes behind the steps for actually circulating eBook readers at two libraries, one public and one academic. Much collaboration and a dose of "logistical ingenuity" is needed between departments in order to do this successfully. It would have been nice to have had more case studies included.

As an excellent follow-up, editor **Polanka** edits a blog with the same name as the book for further musings and developments with eBooks and e-readers: <http://www.libraries.wright.edu/noshelfrequired/>.

The blog received First Place in the Salem Press Academic Blog Award: http://salempress.com/Store/blogs/blog_home.htm.

The blog is a great place to keep up with everything about eBooks. Those of us struggling with how to incorporate eBooks into our library should definitely keep this blog on our list of must-reads! 🍄

Interview — **Jud Dunham** from page 52

partners. These applications aim to improve researcher workflow and enrich content available to our users.

We are also exploring bringing other publishers' content into **SciVerse Hub** in the future. Right now, our focus is on improving **Hub** and growing the **Applications Marketplace** and **Developer Network** ecosystem, to provide our current **SciVerse ScienceDirect** and **SciVerse Scopus** customers with some of the most comprehensive and innovative online discovery tools available today. 🍄

Rumors from page 51

But, not to worry, **Sandy Thatcher**, now retired from **Penn State UP** and so the university press column, will still be contributing a column from time to time. In fact there will be a **Sandy** column in the February issue of **ATG!** Stay tuned!

Let's see. A couple of people have retired! The highly competent **Richard Gedye** has retired from **Oxford University Press** and sends his new email address <gedye@stm-assoc.org> and his snail mail address is: 26 Nuns Road; Winchester; SO23 7EF; UK. I remember way back when going digging at an archaeologi-

cal site in Winchester. It is a delightful town with a fantastic fish and chips take-out place. **Richard** is not really retiring! From 1 January 2011, **STM** has announced that **Richard** will assume responsibility for **STM's Outreach Programmes**, **Research4Life** and patientINFORM access initiatives, the ARDI patent project and **STM's** activities with library organizations. The hard-working **Maurice Long** had developed many of these programs and will be retiring from **STM** at the end of 2010. The firecracker **Michael Mabe** is the CEO of **STM**.

The energetic **Doug LaFrenier** told me at the **Conference** that he is retiring! But he has an idea for the **2011 Charleston Conference (NOVEMBER 2-5 MARK YOUR**

continued on page 56