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Book Reviews -- Monographic Musings

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Book Reviews — Monographic Musings



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

Column Editor's Note: About two-and-a-half years ago, the company *Decision Demographics* prepared a report for the *American Library Association* to inform its strategic planning initiatives (available at <http://www.ala.org/research/librariystaffstats/recruitment>). This report includes rather thought-provoking data regarding the number of librarians by age since 1980. While *Gen Xers* did not make up the largest age group at the time of the report's publication, it is logical to assume that the number of professional librarians born in this generation — my own generation — will continue to grow. How timely, then that *McFarland* has published a collection of essays on this sector of the profession. Many thanks to reviewer *Joey van Arnhem* for her examination of this title. Happy holidays and happy reading, everyone! — *DV*

Wallace, Martin K., Rebecca Tolley-Stokes, and Erik Sean Estep. *The Generation X Librarian: Essays on Leadership, Technology, Pop Culture, Social Responsibility and Professional Identity*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011. 978-0-7864-6309-1. 217 pages. \$55.00.

Reviewed by **Jolanda-Pieta (Joey) van Arnhem, MFA** (Instructor and Technology Coordinator, College of Charleston Libraries) <vanarnhemj@cofc.edu>

The Generation X Librarian: Essays on Leadership, Technology, Pop Culture, Social Responsibility and Professional Identity provides an insightful glimpse into the varied and diverse backgrounds of the Gen X Librarian. This collection of critical essays, edited by **Martin K. Wallace, Rebecca Tolley-Stokes, and Erik Sean Estep** offers a unique and personal take on who Gen Xers are, what makes them tick, and what they bring to the table in roles of leadership, technology, and social responsibility, as well as how they may be instrumental in bridging the current generation gap that exists in many libraries

today. As noted by **Jessica Clemons** in her essay, *Leading the Way into the Future of Libraries* "...a transition is being made from the brick-and-mortar library to include space and place in the abstract." *The Generation X Librarian* clearly elucidates that Gen X Librarians have a lot to contribute to the future of the library.

This collection of essays also provides a refreshing and much needed juxtaposition to mainstream criticism and 90s research of Gen Xers as cynical, disengaged, over-educated slackers who job-hop and are skeptical of organizations and hierarchy. **Mathews** and **Rizzo** clearly examine

these misconceptions in their essay titled *Gen X Librarians, Faculty, Information Literacy*, noting that common characteristics shared by Gen Xers include being "...the first kids who grew up with two working parents or divorced parents, an unstable economy, a hole in the ozone layer, homelessness, AIDS, national debt, crack, video games, and the advent of MTV." They conclude that the prevalence of experiences such as these has helped to create a generation that is self-reliant, entrepreneurial, techno-focused, media-savvy, and socially tolerant. These qualities often make Gen Xers good matches for leadership roles that will help to negotiate change. This generation will by necessity take a lead role in bridging the many gaps caused by technological and social shifts that Libraries are facing now, and will no doubt continue to face in the future.

The Generation X Librarian: Essays on Leadership, Technology, Pop Culture, Social Responsibility and Professional Identity, is designed to concretely examine the Gen X philosophy and provides practical insight and frank discussions from Gen X Librarians in the field on a wide array of topics from Radical Reference to Zine collection. **Wallace, Tolley-Stokes, and Estep's** careful selection of essays encompasses a range of themes that include "generational differences and stereotypes, technology, library management and leadership, social justice and responsibilities of librarians, and the portrayal

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Americans in the radio industry. The encyclopedia entries themselves cover obscure as well as famous performers and programs. Painstakingly researched and full of germane facts, the entries are written in an accessible, reader-friendly style that both researchers and *aficionados* will appreciate. Enhancing the entries, the author also provides a list of radio stations and their locations as well as a useful general bibliography of books, articles, dissertations, magazines, newspapers, and Websites. Each entry also has a list of sources used. Adding more value, there is a brief chronology of debuts and notable events and a week-by-week episode guide to two pioneering black radio programs, the *Negro Achievement Hour* and the *Negro Art Group Hour*.

The *Encyclopedia of Black Radio in the United States 1921-1955* is one of those works that enlivens as well as informs. It offers a brief but fascinating look at what is now a cultural artifact and helps bring it back to life. It is an obvious labor of love that will benefit both scholars and interested readers. One only wishes that the publication budget would have allowed for photos to complement the text. Regardless, this is another reference title that will be equally at home in circulation and is appropriate for both academic and public library collections. It is not available electronically. (This title will act as a worthy complement for libraries owning **Henry T. Sampson's** *Swingin' on the Ether Waves: A Chronological History of African Americans in Radio and Television Broadcasting, 1925-1955* (2005, 978-0810840874, \$446.55).

McFarland has also revised an out-of-print *LJ* "Best of Reference" title that a number of reference librarians may have come across in their travels. *Antarctica: an Encyclopedia* (2011, 978-0786435906, \$495) first published in 1990 is now in its second edition and has been greatly expanded. In fact, Editor **John Stewart** has doubled the number of entries to 30,000, obviously taking pains to insure that twenty years of change and discovery are adequately represented in this work.

All entries are arranged alphabetically and value-added features include numerous cross-references making up for the lack of an index as well as a selective bibliography that should please serious scholars. But it is the *Encyclopedia* entries that are obviously the big draw. They offer straightforward and thorough coverage of historical events, key explorers and expeditions, scientists and scientific discoveries, ships and equipment, and the flora and fauna that make up the story of Antarctica. But perhaps the biggest contribution is the attention paid to geographical locations and features. While numerous national gazetteers were employed to gather information, heavy use was also made of the SCAR (Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research) composite gazetteer. The results are a comprehensive reflection of the geography of this fascinating continent. Each of these entries gives the precise latitude and longitude of the location/feature, a brief but clearly written descrip-

tion and a discussion of its naming. (In fairness, it must also be said that the *Encyclopedia* offers an equally thorough and comprehensive treatment in those articles touching on the history, science, and personalities of Antarctica.)

Antarctica: an Encyclopedia is crammed full of names, dates, and facts that the diligent researcher will revel in. Editor **John Stewart** has produced a serious and scholarly work from numerous sources for which he deserves a great deal of credit. This work will be most at home in academic libraries or on the personal shelves of the devoted scholar. It is not available electronically.

Libraries looking for a solid reference with numerous color photos and a focus on the environment, ecology, and wildlife will want to consider *Antarctica and the Arctic: The Complete Encyclopedia* (2001, 978-1552975459, available used from sites like **Amazon**).

The *Settlement of America* (2011, 978-0765619846, \$245) is a new reference work from **ME Sharpe** whose subtitle: *Encyclopedia of Westward Expansion from Jamestown to the closing of the Frontier* gives you a pretty good idea of its focus. Edited by **James Crutchfield, Candy Moulton, and Terry A. Del Bene**, this two-volume set provides readers with some 500 articles covering "personalities and peoples, places, events, institutions, movements, and many other topics on the expanding frontier."

The *Settlement of America* also has number of value-added features, not the least of which is the introductory section of essays that discuss major themes and lay a foundation for the rest of the encyclopedia. These essays broadly discuss topics like the initial Trans-Appalachian Frontier and the Indian tribes that first populated the West as well as major commercial motivators like the Fur Trade and various Gold Rushes. In addition, there are essays on key developments in transport like the Overland Trails and the Railroads as well as entries on the importance of the Military. There is also an essay that touches on the Arts and Letters that influenced the frontier. These introductory essays are followed by the articles themselves and include specific biographical entries, coverage of particular Indian tribes, and discussions of various expeditions and surveys, wars and battles, laws and treaties, key trails and passes, and important territorial acquisitions. Each entry has a brief list of further readings and the set has a "topic finder" grouping related subjects as well as a general index. The text is written in a reader-friendly, fact-based fashion and is enhanced with photos and illustrations. A chronology and a solid collection of primary documents round out the *Encyclopedia*.

The *Settlement of America* will appeal to a diverse audience including lay readers, high school students, and first-year undergraduates. It offers useful background information on both familiar and more obscure topics as well as providing leads to further research. As such it should be considered by public, high school and college libraries and is appropriate for both reference and circulating collections depending on need. Libraries already owning other titles like **Macmillan's** *Encyclopedia of the American West* (1996, 978-0028974958, available used on

sites like **Amazon**) and **Yale University Press's** *New Encyclopedia of the American West* (1998, 978-0300070880, \$85) will want it to update and enhance their collections. This title is also available on **Sharpe Online Reference** <http://www.sharpe-online.com/SOLR/a/book-abstract/24>.

The *ALA Guide to Medical and Health Sciences Reference* (2011, 978-0-8389-1023-8 \$75) is another spin off from **ALA's** online *Guide to Reference* (www.guidetoreference.org). As such it offers annotated listings of sources ranging from handbooks and encyclopedias to Websites and online databases intended to assist researchers in locating facts and background information on a variety of topics.

The *Guide* consists of nearly 1,600 entries organized under thirteen major categories or chapters. These chapters cover broad topics as diverse as bioethics, health care, and toxicology while including other areas of interest like consumer health, nutrition, nursing, medical jurisprudence, health care, pharmacology, and psychiatry. As with past *Guides* drawn from the online *Guide to Reference*, each chapter is divided by format or type of resource. There is a wide range of formats including dictionaries, directories, histories, encyclopedias, handbooks, statistical sources, and of course, websites and databases. Each entry offers bibliographic information and/or websites addresses as well as clear and descriptive annotations.

The editors are on target when they say that the *ALA Guide to Medical and Health Sciences Reference* is a "usably comprehensive rather than exhaustive" listing. And although it includes some foreign language titles, it consists of predominantly English language sources. Regardless, its utility for academic librarians as well as those in specialized medical libraries is undeniable. Naturally it can be used as a tool to locate the most useful sources to answer a specific research inquiry but it can also aid as a selection tool for both electronic and print collection development, as well as a resource in developing online finding aids for numerous medical and health related topics. 🌱

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of librarians in popular culture." The book's contribution to the professional literature about Generation X Librarians provides an inside look at the profession and the changes it is facing. *The Generation X Librarian: Essays on Leadership, Technology, Pop Culture, Social Responsibility and Professional Identity* is a valuable practical aid for any librarian. The book has something for everyone, whether you are a Baby Boomer trying to manage a Gen Xer, a Gen X Librarian trying to find your way, or a Millennial just entering or thinking about joining the library profession. This is one book that you will want to read, keep, and re-read.

The Generation X Librarian: Essays on Leadership, Technology, Pop Culture, Social Responsibility and Professional Identity is available at www.mcfarlandpub.com or by calling 800-253-2187. 🌱