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Collecting to the Core--The Renaissance: Secular and Sacred

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Research). His research interests include data preservation, history of computing and paraconsistent reasoning, and overcoming the inability of computers to deal properly with inconsistent data.

Delve and Anderson organize the book into six areas: why and what to preserve; memory institution/data archival perspective; approaches, practices, and tools; case studies; legal perspective; and pathfinder. This helps the reader gain a sense of not only the complexity of the digital objects but also the roles of responsibility. The book carefully defines what complex digital projects are and why they are important to preserve. It highlights some successes and failures the preservation community has had with these objects in order to establish best practices for future projects. These best practices focus on preserving technical environments, software, hardware, and practice by migration, emulation, exhumation, etc. It also draws attention to issues and problems still not solved such as copyright and other legal issues. The book is an interesting read with a focus on UK and European projects and somewhat lacking in U.S. initiatives. However, it is a well written and a valuable resource for the preservation field.

Tidal, Junior. *Usability and the Mobile Web: A LITA Guide.*
Chicago, IL: ALA Techsource, 2015. 978-0-8389-1301-7.
128 pages. \$65.00.

Reviewed by **Natalie Shults** (Virtual Services Librarian,
Schertz Public Library) <nshults@schertz.com>

I will admit I was a little apprehensive in reviewing this book. As a new MSLIS graduate, I'm thinking that the concept of the mobile Web would be much more suitable for my experienced colleagues to tackle. I'm assuming that this guide would be more useful if I have some familiarity with the topic since most of the technical language might be hard

for me to grasp. However, when I did jump into reading *Usability and the Mobile Web: A LITA Guide*, I found myself immediately at ease as the author, **Junior Tidal** guides the reader through mobile devices, the different apps, how to test their usability, HTML, CSS, and everything in between one might need when developing content for the mobile Web.

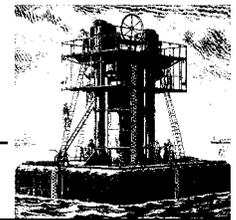
Most people (if not all) know what a mobile device is, but **Tidal** explains that there is more to it than **Apple's** iOS versus **Android**. The different screen sizes result in a different experience for the user as well as the resolution and orientation of the device. While this may seem apparent and common knowledge, it adds to the complexity when one is determining how best to present information via the mobile Web. He also points out the differences between mobile devices and desktop machines, particularly the fact that some mobile devices have slower processing power. This can be surprising since we generally regard these smartphones to be miniature computers that are able to match if not exceed their processing power. The first few chapters discuss the advantages and disadvantages for mobile apps, hybrids, and mobile Websites. This helps determine the best choice for your specific library especially in the earlier stages of implementing a usable mobile interface. By getting an idea of the choices you can go with early on in the project, libraries are able to narrow down on a particular route. The rest of the chapters outline the various options necessary to put a project to completion.

If you are a visual learner, **Tidal** provides screenshots and figures that illustrate the steps as well as examples of the processes in action. I personally find these to be particularly helpful for those wishing to make a mobile interface more usable through a user-centered design approach. I also appreciate the author putting in a lot of specifics regarding the steps involved when testing mobile usability. The book concludes with a chapter on gathering data and an appendix with sample scripts and forms that are useful for those wanting to do their own usability tests.

Now that I'm a newly minted Virtual Services Librarian, I find myself not only more confident about where I fit in professionally, but also with the mobile Web if and when our library decides to take the Website in a new direction. I wholeheartedly recommend this book to anyone, techies or not, looking to know more about utilizing the mobile Web. 🐼

Collecting to the Core — The Renaissance: Secular and Sacred

by **Dr. Thomas M. Izbicki** (Associate University Librarian, Research and Instructional Services, Rutgers University; Renaissance Studies Editor, *Resources for College Libraries*) <tizbicki@rci.rutgers.edu>



Column Editor: **Anne Doherty** (*Resources for College Libraries* Project Editor, CHOICE/ACRL) <adoherty@ala-choice.org>

Column Editor's Note: The "Collecting to the Core" column highlights monographic works that are essential to the academic library within a particular discipline, inspired by the *Resources for College Libraries* bibliography (online at <http://www.rclweb.net>). In each essay, subject specialists introduce and explain the classic titles and topics that continue to remain relevant to the undergraduate curriculum and library collection. Disciplinary trends may shift, but some classics never go out of style. — AD

The Renaissance is not a tidy topic. While often reduced to a trope in popular discourse, the Renaissance is a complex and rich scholarly subject that crosses disciplines and contributes to the understanding of Western civilization. The cultural phenomena associated with it emerged in Italy, beginning in the early fourteenth century. **Dante Alighieri** cre-

ated monuments of literature in the vernacular. **Petrarch**, attempting to recover the heritage of classical antiquity, created a periodization dismissive of the intervening Middle or "Dark" Ages that still persists. Interpretation of the Renaissance, especially in its Italian cradle, was largely formed by **Jacob Burckhardt's** 1860 work *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*.¹ **Burckhardt** eschewed a traditional political approach for the study of Renaissance culture, especially art, as well as secular aspects of social institutions. This foundational work serves as an early example of cultural history and created a popular image of the Renaissance which has endured. The historical philosopher **Ernst Cassirer** placed the Renaissance at the origins of modern thought in his tome *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, first published in 1927 and translated into English in 1963.² **Cassirer**, together with **Paul Oskar Kristeller** and **John Herman Randall, Jr.**, translated and edited *The Renaissance Phi-*

losophy of Man, which provides primary historical writings by leading thinkers of the time, including **Petrarch**.³ These humanists, most of them professional men of letters, played a key role in the development and interpretation of Renaissance thought. **Kristeller** provides a comprehensive scholarly introduction to the philosophical, literary, theological, and scientific themes that flourished in the Renaissance in his *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*.⁴ Consisting of fourteen essays based on original lectures, this work outlines the development of humanist, Aristotelian, and Platonist ideas.

In addition to these secular explorations, sacred interpretations of the Italian Renaissance have also emerged, proceeding along two different tracks: one emphasizes the continuity of medieval religious traditions; the other focuses on the absorption of earlier Christian sources and the emergence of a new humanist theology. A starting point for the study of traditional reli-

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gion in Renaissance Italy is the early fourteenth century, at the close of the late Middle Ages and during the time of **Dante**. **George W. Dameron** provides a partial overview of this period in *Florence and Its Church in the Age of Dante*.⁵ Women's religious roles are examined in a longer temporal context in *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, edited by **Daniel Bornstein** and **Roberto Rusconi**.⁶ By the fifteenth century, movements for reform and humanistic approaches to theology were very much alive, as **Denys Hay** outlines in *The Church in Italy in the Fifteenth Century*.⁷

During the Renaissance, two historical religious figures stand out: **Catherine of Siena** (1347-80) and **Bernardino of Siena** (1380-1444). Both were influential theological figures during their lifetimes and are now canonized saints. **Catherine**, a Dominican tertiary, was a mystic whom **Pope Paul VI** later declared a Doctor of the Church for her significant writings. **Catherine** left more than 300 letters and 26 prayers that serve as primary historical, religious, and literary texts. Her *Dialogue*, translated by **Suzanne Noffke**, is a discussion between a soul "rising up" and God.⁸ **Bernardino** was a priest and Franciscan who traveled throughout Italy preaching directly to the public, drawing huge crowds of people that enthusiastically received his sermons and often recorded his words. **Iris Origo's** *The World of San Bernardino* illustrates how deeply engaged **Bernardino** was in society and contemporary efforts to restore the role of the Catholic Church.⁹ His fiery preaching targeted moral degradation and groups he regarded as dangerous, including Jews, witches, heretics, and sodomites, as **Franco Mormando** shows in *The Preacher's Demons: Bernardino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy*.¹⁰

While **Catherine of Siena's** mysticism and **Bernardino's** evangelicalism serve as exemplars of traditional religious practice during this time, the emergent Latin humanism also included devotional aspects. **Petrarch**, well known for his Italian poetry, was also engaged in Latin scholarship and is largely attributed for his significant role in developing humanist thought and promoting secular work in tandem with religious practice. He wrote *De otio religioso* or *On Religious Leisure* and *The Secret*, both of which approached Christianity from a very personal and literary slant.¹¹⁻¹² **Petrarch's** contemplative work was not always well received by the established public and political leaders. In response to his writing, **Coluccio Salutati**, the chancellor of Florence, defended the use of classical texts, as **Ronald G. Witt** documents in *Hercules at the Crossroads: The Life, Works, Thought of Coluccio Salutati*.¹³ Employing literary scholarship for Christian purposes, including the creation of texts couched in elegant Latin, can be seen in both Florentine and Roman contexts. In Florence, the most important figure for the recovery and translation of Patristic texts was the Camaldolese monk **Ambrogio Traversari**. **Charles L. Stinger** explores **Traversari's** impact in *Humanism and the Church Fathers:*

Ambrogio Traversari (1386-1439) and Christian Antiquity in the Italian Renaissance.¹⁴ The Roman adaptation of humanism was tied more directly to the papacy, as **Stinger** documents in *The Renaissance in Rome*.¹⁵ Literary creations in the Roman tradition included orations and sermons delivered before the popes using a proper Latin style. **John O'Malley** offers the classic study of this oratory style and its influence in *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, c. 1450-1521*.¹⁶ The best summary of humanistic theology is **Charles Edward Trinkhaus's** *In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*.¹⁷

Although the Renaissance flowered in Italy, it spread far beyond the borders and confines of that nation-state — geographically, politically, and theologically — into Northern Europe. The transmission of humanist thought and methodologies outside Italy meant entering a different intellectual and religious milieu. The religious scene in the North was dominated by devotional currents like the *Devotio Moderna*, which called for religious reform by emphasizing humility and piety. Insights into this movement are found through translations of primary sources in *Devotio Moderna: Basic Writings*, edited by **John H. Van Engen**.¹⁸ The humanists also applied their methods of study to translating and analyzing biblical manuscripts. In *Humanists and Holy Writ: New Testament Scholarship in the Renaissance*, **Jerry H. Bentley** tracks how the humanists' interpretations of the original Greek scriptural text undermined the authority of the Latin Vulgate Bible and anticipated later biblical studies.¹⁹ **Lewis W. Spitz** follows the analogous work by German scholars in *The Religious Renaissance of the German Humanists*.²⁰ Finally, it should not be forgotten that this time period also featured **Christopher Columbus's** transatlantic expedition. The impact of discoveries in the New World on Europe's intellectual presuppositions are featured in **Anthony Grafton's** *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery*.²¹

In the course of the sixteenth century, the religious issues of the Italian and northern Renaissance were submerged in larger developments. Among these were the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, followed in subsequent centuries by the Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution. Italy suffered from ongoing wars between the French and Spanish crown, losing its economic and cultural preeminence. The influence of the Renaissance's humanistic theology was largely subsumed in responses to these challenges, though its legacy persists in the methods of humanistic study that remain active today. The secular interpretations of **Burckhardt** and **Cassirer** have been modified but not entirely displaced. The work of more recent scholars, especially **Trinkhaus** and **O'Malley**, adds depth and nuance to the larger picture and illuminates the sacred aspect of humanists' work. Scholarly interpretations of the Renaissance — even considering ongoing debates regarding geography, periodization, and the concept of the Renaissance as a true period of "rebirth" — remain guided by classic works such as those discussed here. 🌿

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Editor's note: An asterisk () denotes a title selected for *Resources for College Libraries*.