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Booklover-Draft

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Smith, A. Arro. *Capturing our Stories: An Oral History of Librarianship in Translation.* Chicago, IL: Neal-Schuman, 2017. 9780838914618. 224 pages. \$45.00

Reviewed by **Ashley Fast Bailey** (Director, Collection Development and Workflow Solutions, Midwestern and Southeastern US, GOBI Library Solutions) <abailey@ybp.com>

A. Arro Smith gathers professional histories of retired librarians in *Capturing our Stories: An Oral History of Librarianship in Translation*. Over the last few decades the field of librarianship has seen great change and transformation. The librarians that were part of ushering in the changes that the 20th century brought have a rich social memory to share. **Smith**, Technical Services Manager at the **San Marcos Public Library**, collects the stories and memories of thirty-five experienced librarians. He drew on his doctoral dissertation for this work, and his advisor, **Dr. Loriene Roy**, is the featured foreword writer. Not only does this work include the stories and history of past librarians, it includes advice for conducting one's own oral history project.

Smith divides this work into two parts. Part one includes the stories and history of past librarians and part two goes into detail on his methodology and ways that one can go about conducting an oral history project. He begins this work by sharing the stories of many great experienced librarians in the field. Before diving into the common thread all librarians share, he finds out how each happened or chose to be in the field. Before the common thread of each story, which is that of library school, he finds out how each person ended up in the field. Aside from the minority who knew they wanted to be a librarian from a young age, **Smith** found many stories of "accidental" librarians. It was almost as if the field choose them. Despite most of the interviewees not setting out to become librarians, no one would have changed their career path.

Whether a school librarian, technical services librarian, or a reference librarian, all the interviewees had a shared memory of library school. If you're reading this, you might have just smiled a little thinking back on

your time in library school. We all took many of the same basic courses and then choose various areas within the field to dive in or specialize in. This part of the librarian journey imprints on each of us. On the road to becoming a librarian, a very interesting thread in **Smith's** interviews appeared. That is cataloging classes. Whether remembered fondly or with hardship, it came up over and over in the oral history interviews.

After **Smith** talks about the road to deciding to be a librarian and the collective memory of library school, he goes on to explore the clichés and stereotypes in the field. Both within and outside of the profession there are clichés and stereotypes. From a shushing librarian, to personality traits across the profession, to wearing one's hair in a bun with reading glasses, each person he talked to had comments and stories.

These experienced librarians also ushered in a new era in the library world. Most started their careers in a very paper-based and hand-written system. In fact, there were terms in the work I had never heard before. While reading I received an education in library hand and some of the precursors to the OPAC. Each librarian had a fascinating history to tell of the technology changes they experienced throughout their career. It is hard to imagine some of these changes were even just 25 years ago. These oral histories are priceless firsthand accounts of changes in our field.

Part I of *Capturing our Stories* concludes with a section on regrets. All the librarians that gave an oral history would not have changed their choice to enter the field of librarianship for anything, but there are a few regrets some had looking back. The book starts with the nostalgia of choosing to enter the field and library school then wraps up with reflections after retirement, and includes many fun stories of the in between. A common theme among all those interviewed was their desire to help people and to contribute positively to society. There were repetitive elements and surprises along the way. **Smith** wrote with an ease that made reading the stories of these experienced librarians a very entertaining experience.

Capturing our Stories: An Oral History of Librarianship in Translation concludes with a practical guide to capture the stories of oral history. **Smith** writes about his methodology for his dissertation project and examines the theories he used from the emerging field of memory studies. To wrap up, he provides advice and tips for conducting one's own oral history project and a meditation on oral history work. I found this read very informative and enjoyable. 🌱

Booklover — Draft

Column Editor: **Donna Jacobs** (Retired, Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, SC 29425) <donna.jacobs55@gmail.com>



Albert Camus' novel, *The First Man* is a draft. A draft containing all the intimacies of notations in the margin, interleaves of comments, doodles, asterisks, and thoughts for further story expansion. Found in the wreckage of the 1960 automobile accident that took **Camus'** life, the manuscript was published 35 years later by his daughter, **Catherine Camus**. To have the opportunity to explore the initial thoughts of a Nobel Prize-winning author during the development of a piece of writing that would hopefully become a final polished story is not missed on this booklover. I share with you large excerpts in order that you may also ponder on this amazing "draft."

Albert Camus won the 1957 Nobel Prize in Literature "for his important literary production, which with clear-sighted earnestness illuminates the problems of the human conscience in our times." **Camus** was the first African-born literature Laureate and the second youngest after **Rudyard Kipling**. A quick read

of his biographical sketch provides the framework to understand the quasi-autobiographical nature held in the story of **Jacques Cormery** in *The First Man*.

The story opens: "Above the wagon rolling along a stony road, big thick clouds were hurrying to the East through the dusk. Three days ago they had inflated over the Atlantic, had waited for a wind from the West, had set out, slowly at first then faster and faster, had flown over the phosphorescent autumn waters, straight to the continent, had unraveled on the Moroccan peaks, had gathered again in flocks on the high plateaus of Algeria, and now, at the approaches to the Tunisian frontier, were trying to reach the Tyrrhenian Sea to lose themselves in it. After a journey of thousands of kilometers over what seemed to be an immense island, shielded by the moving waters to the North and to the South by the congealed waves of the sands, passing scarcely any faster above this nameless country than had empires and

peoples over the millennia, their momentum was wearing out and some already were melting into occasional large raindrops that were beginning to plop on the canvas hood above the four travelers." Another definition of draft comes to mind and I can feel the cold wet air entering the lungs of the travelers.

The story goes back and forth in time, a man intent on an understanding through reflection and a pilgrimage to find his father. **Camus'** father came from a poor agricultural background and was killed during the Battle of the Marne during World War I when **Camus** was one year old. **Jacques Cormery's** father was also of minimal means and killed in the war in France prior to his first birthday.

"And **Jacques** tried, with the little he knew from his mother, to picture the same man nine years later, married, father of two, who had achieved a somewhat better position in life and then was summoned back to Algiers to

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be mobilized, the long journey by night with the patient wife and the unbearable children, the parting at the station and then, three days later, at the little apartment in Belcourt, his sudden appearance in the Zouave regiment's handsome red-and-blue uniform with its baggy pantaloons, sweating under the thick wool in the July* (August) heat, a straw hat in his hand because he had neither tarboosh nor helmet, after he had sneaked out of the depot under the arches of the docks and run to kiss his wife and children before shipping out that night for the France he had never seen, (He had never seen France. He saw it and was killed.) on the sea that had never before carried him; and he embraced them, strongly and quickly, and he left at the same pace, and the woman on the little balcony waved to him and he responded on the run, turning to wave the straw hat, before once more racing down the street that was gray with dust and heat, and then he disappeared in front of the movie theatre, farther on, into the radiant light of the morning from which he would never return. **Jacques** would have to imagine the rest." Draft as a noun for compulsory military service and draft as a verb for recruitment for a purpose have now joined the draft of cold air in this draft of beautiful words that reflect **Camus'** very intimate thoughts on becoming a man.

I would be remiss if I didn't give a nod to the part of the story that explores **Jacques'** love of books and the public library. I leave you with **Camus'** words that speak right to this booklover.

On Books: "**Jacques** had always devoured any books that came to hand, and he consumed them with the same appetite he felt for living, playing or dreaming."

On the public library: "But about the same time they started at the *lycée*, a public library was opened in the area, halfway between the street where **Jacques** lived and the heights where the more refined districts began, with their villas surrounded by little gardens full of scented plants that thrived on the hot humid slopes of Algiers. These villas circled the grounds of Sainte-Odile, a religious boarding school that took only girls. It was in this neighborhood, so near and yet so far from their own, that **Jacques** and **Pierre** experienced their deepest emotions (that it is not yet time to discuss, that will be discussed, etc.). The frontier between these two worlds (one dusty and treeless, where all the space was devoted to its residents and the stone that sheltered them, the other where flowers and trees supplied this world's true luxury) was described by a rather wide boulevard with superb plane trees planted along its two sidewalks. Villas stretched along one bank of this frontier and low-cost buildings along the other. The public library was built on that border." 🐾

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Rumors
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others had spoken, he reflected that there are two important dangers to recognize as an editor when taking an extended leave — "Circulation might go down," he said, "or, it might not." **Michael** sends thanks and congratulations to us for what the **Charleston Conference** and **ATG** have become! HA! We aren't through yet and neither are you, **Michael**!!

Did I ever tell y'all that it was the awesome **Rosann Bazirjian** who first recommended **Michael** to me as a great speaker and columnist! Thanks to **Rosann** who has retired and settled in Myrtle Beach hopefully soaking up the sun soon!

Speaking of surgeries, **Bob Holley** has recovered and is back in the **ATG Saddle**, this issue, p.57, "Peer Review of Articles From Third World Countries."

There are so many indispensable people to **ATG** and the **Charleston Conference**! **Ramune Kubilius** is one of them! She just sent us a link to a wonderfully awesome post from **Scott Plutchak's** blog! Every single one of the **Charleston Conference Directors** deserves a huge **Shout out!!** and **vote of thanks**. And **thanks, Scott!**

<http://tscott.typepad.com/tsp/2017/12/theres-nothing-quite-like-chsconf.html>

Speaking of which, over the holiday, I did some reading one of which was **Cancel your**

own goddam subscription! by **William F. Buckley!** Recommended by the inimitable **Leah Hinds!**

Speaking of Shout Out! Here's a huge one for **Erin Gallagher** of **Reed College!** For the fourth year, **Erin** ran **Poll-a-Paloosa**, the closing session of the **Charleston Conference**. And we had a packed house! Like wow! **Erin** was accompanied by the bam-zowir **Nicole Ameduri** of **Springer Nature**, who ran the mike all around the ballroom in a designer (sorry, y'all I don't which one) pair of very very high heels! She kept us all, so to speak on our toes! It was an awesome ending session.

While we are **Shouting out about Erin**, I want to congratulate her on the **Up and Comer initiative** that she started. **Erin** single handedly worked on the application process, ran the committee, and helped to select the 20 up and comers who were selected! 19 of their profiles are in this issue of **ATG** (pp 79-89) and we will be doing podcasts online with many of them. Just a few comments about each of them. **Kate Angeli** (LIU) Winner of the ALA LIRTS 2016 Jesse Shera Award with a colleague, **Charlie Bennett** (Georgia Tech) has a radio show *Lost in the Stacks*, **Shaun Bennett** (NSCU) likes OERs, **Ethan Cutler** (Western Michigan University) recently awarded a technology enhancement Award, **Kiyomi Deards** Success of SciPop videos on YouTube with collaboration of ACS and others, **Hailey Fargo** recently launched the *LibParlor*, a blog for new and experienced LIS research-

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