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A Review of "The Transformed Library: E-Books, Expertise, and Evolution"

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THE TRANSFORMED LIBRARY: E-BOOKS, EXPERTISE, AND EVOLUTION.

Woodward, Jeannette. Chicago: American Library Association, 2013. 131pp. ISBN 978-0-8389-1164-8.

That libraries have suffered during the economic recession of the past several years is beyond dispute. Slashed budgets and closed libraries are an ever-present reminder of the grim situation many librarians face. In *The Transformed Library*, author Jeannette Woodward intends “to provide a balanced assessment of the situation that confronts both libraries and information professionals” (ix).

In Chapter 1, “Gutenberg Meets Kindle,” the author discusses the emerging phenomenon of e-readers and their impact on reading books, concluding that “if libraries are to flourish in the twenty-first century, e-book circulation will need to become a high priority” (11). For various reasons however, as noted in Chapter 2 (“Libraries vs. E-Publishers”), “circulating e-books ... becomes considerably less convenient than circulating printed books for both the library staff and their customers” (14). Chapter 3 (“The Age of High Anxiety”) details some of the existential threats that libraries are facing. Chief among them is outsourcing which, to the professional librarian, is considered the “evil empire” (34). In Chapter 4 (“The Library in Cyberspace”), libraries were early adopters of technology but then somehow we fell behind. Chapter 5 (“Will the Coffee Shop Save Us?”) considers the library as place. Chapter 6 (“Library Careers That Won’t Go Away”) discusses librarianship as a career in relation to other, related employment choices such as information technology. Chapters 7-9 deal with “Survival Strategies” for public, academic, and school libraries, respectively.

While the recent recession has had a devastating effect on libraries and on other sectors of our society, there are other factors that will continue to strain library budgets even in better times. For example, even in good economic conditions serials costs, which make up a huge percentage of the library budget, will continue to rise beyond the rate of inflation. By about the third chapter of this book I was actually taking note of all the times the author mentioned the “recession.” I wonder had there never been an economic downturn for the past several years if this book would even have been written. Also, while I am fairly certain that the author would agree that having ongoing communication with our user base is vital for the library’s success, I sometimes felt that she missed opportunities to convey that in her book. When discussing the online presence of the academic library, Woodward states that “effective websites only emerge from partnerships among LIS professionals, designers, and technicians” (105). My immediate reaction was “what about the user as a vital partner in building a successful, customer-friendly, website?” In general, the author tries to take on too much in the 131 pages that *The Transformed Library* encompasses. Perhaps separate volumes could have been written focusing on each of the library types (public, academic, and school).

Jeannette Woodward is a principal of Wind River Library and Nonprofit Consulting in Wyoming. She is the author of several books, including *A Librarian's Guide to an Uncertain Job Market* (2011).

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