lent reading, hearing reading, reading in bed (highly recommended), reading pictures, the shape of the book, translating as reading, and memory and reading. Within a single chapter, the reader is led from Augustine to Emerson and from medieval *jongleurs* to workers in Cuban cigar factories in the nineteenth century. Although some may be confused or put off by this "method," the impact of the book derives precisely from Manguel's ability to juxtapose the disparate and the different.

Through it all, though, there are at least two themes that connect the tissue of examples and episodes that stretches throughout the book. One is Manguel's devotion to the privacy of reading. For Manguel, the act of reading—no matter where or how it is done—is the quintessential private act. Indeed, it is the private nature of reading that mocks any attempt to write *the* history of reading. Reading defines a zone of personal space that no one or no thing can take from us. If we have nothing else, we have at least that space. However, it is not an introverted, alienated privacy that attracts Manguel. Rather, privacy is the precondition for creating, through reading, bonds of community across time and space. Reading becomes an assertion of fellowship and solidarity; readers meet other readers. In a book packed with all manner of illustrations, one in particular stands out: a two-page spread of a shot of three men in suits, overcoats, and hats silently browsing the shelves of a bombed-out library in London, in 1940. Knee deep in detritus, the gents respectfully go about their business as if nothing would ever deter them. They will persist alone together, readers each and all.

The book's other theme anchors it firmly in the postmodern present: the omnipotence of the reader. The author, remember, is dead. There are only readers and texts, and it is readers who con-struct the texts. The author is only an author; the author must die—or least disappear—in order for the text to live. Manguel bestows on the reader an unbounded freedom to create and re-cre-

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ate texts at will. In the kingdom of the book, the reader is sovereign. Yet as appealing as this voluntarism is, it surely overlooks the extent to which readers, too, exist in contexts—contexts that constrain and direct their imaginations. If we truly are what we read, then the latter in some measure defines the limits of our creative freedom.

However one feels about the book, it is hard to come away from it without liking its author. He is warm and inviting, and he has a Borgesian sense of playfulness that allows everyone to feel at home in his crazy sandbox. Who could not like someone who asserts a truism that few would dare acknowledge: "I judge a book by its cover; I judge a book by its shape. . . ." Right on! But I must confess to finding the cover of Manguel's book merely interesting rather than compelling. However, do not throw it away. Inside, it contains a "reader's timeline" running from 4000 BCE to the present, suitable for display as a handy reference guide. If you want a history of reading from *A History of Reading*, that is where you will get it.—*Michael Ryan, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia*

The National Electronic Library: A Guide to the Future for Library Managers. Ed. Gary M. Pitkin. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Pr. (The Greenwood Library Management Collection), 1996. 192p. $55. ISBN 0-313-29613-8.

"The future ain't what it used to be" was a comment I heard recently at a professional conference. How right that person was. Who would have predicted in June 1993 that a piece of software—Mosaic—distributed for free by a comparatively little-known research center (the National Center for Supercomputing Applications at the University of Illinois) would have recast the future of the information industry so radically. Today, we cannot imagine a world that will not be Web-based. This collection of essays purports to be a guide to this redrawn future for library managers. In his introduction, Gary Pitkin states that the volume focuses on "where we have been, where we are, and what we need to be in terms of success in the electronic environment." What the introduction does not state is that the papers were presented at the 1995 conference Computing for Small Libraries, held in Washington, D.C. It also does not state that the presenters were asked to respond to Brian Hawkins's seminal 1994 *Serials Review* article ("Creating the Library of the Future: Incrementalism Won't Get Us There!") attesting to the need for a National Electronic Library (NEL), and defining a variety of models that might fit this need. Several of the authors refer in detail to the Hawkins article (and others that he wrote on the same topic), so it would have been helpful to state this up front.

It takes real skill to compile a set of essays about the future of libraries that transcends the level of "just another set of opinion pieces." Two recent examples of such collections from the library profession are *University Libraries and Scholarly Communication* (A. M. Cummings et al, 1992) and *Preferred Futures for Libraries* (Richard Dougherty and Carol Hughes, 1991). The volume under review, although containing some interesting chapters, does not reach that level of vision and prescience as a whole. The only essay that comes close is Robert Heterick's endpaper "Are Libraries Necessary in the Revolutionized Environment?" (Heterick is currently president of EDUCOM, and is a frequent and eloquent writer on the future of information technology in higher education.) However, the writing generally is articulate and thoughtful.

Weaknesses of the collection include: (1) lack of a definition of "the national electronic library" and how it differs from the National Digital Library (NDL) initiative of the Library of Congress. These two terms are bandied around indiscriminately, in many cases the one and the other being interchangeable; (2) omission of the fact that the articles are responding to Brian Hawkins's essay on the NEL (as well as the failure to include the Hawkins essay for reference); (3) a retrospective focus ("where we have been and where we are") rather than a future-oriented focus ("developing new ways of perceiving, thinking and behaving").

The first section of the book centers on the concept of an NEL and Hawkins's models for it. Starting off the volume with a challenge, Joy Hughes and Karyle Butcher of Oregon State University courageously address what they see as the need to "reallocate library acquisitions budgets" in order to fund collaborative efforts to build the NEL. They cite Hawkins's trend analysis figures indicating that "by the year 2001, the combined impact of inflation and the growth of information would result in our libraries being able to purchase 2 per cent of the total information acquired only two decades before." Hughes and Butcher address the various models outlined by Hawkins, and then focus on the need for collaboration to overcome such barriers as lack of appropriate copyright/site-licensing regulations, lack of standards, and the inability to develop cost-effective ways to provide training on all fronts. This message is echoed by Alan

Charnes in his chapter on consortia and the NEL. Not surprisingly, because he is Executive Director of the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries (CARL), Charnes proposes the consortial structure as a way to achieve the collaboration that Hughes and Butcher put forward.

The concept of the NEL is handled from the perspective of both academic institutions (Thomas Peischl) and public libraries (Agnes Griffin). Peischl reminds librarians that academe has bigger things to think about than the NEL, such as "the future of information services across the university," distance learning, productivity, and diversity. Meanwhile, Griffin effectively describes the differing approaches that public librarians are taking as they build the public on-ramp to the information superhighway. She succinctly addresses issues that are crucial for librarians, although she does not adequately highlight the distinction between universal access and universal service. Faye Vowell reiterates what we all know to be the obvious—that LIS curricula will need to be flexible and responsive to changing information needs. She calls on LIS educators to provide continuing education for midcareer librarians, but does not address the retooling of those self-same library school professors.

The second section of the book focuses on facilities, services, and planning in the library of the future. From the collection development point of view, Johanna Sherrer questions the old assumption that current clients' needs are automatically being met as the result of earlier collection development decisions, and emphasizes the need to develop selection expertise across formats. She provides an excellent list of competencies required of collection development staff in the electronic era. David Kohl and William Gosling present well-articulated essays on how public services (Kohl) and technical services (Gosling) are, or should be, approaching the reengineering of both service ethic and process.

What does this volume add to our knowledge on the managerial implications of new technology? Not much. How far does it go to assuage our uncertainties and guide us toward the future? Not very far. Is it worth reading? Yes, if only to emphasize the fact that we still have a long way to go to develop "new ways of perceiving, thinking and behaving."

I would like to add that I am a great believer in first impressions and this book fails to make a good one. It does not excite attention in the way that so many print offerings do in today's high-tech, desktop publishing environment. There are no glitzy diagrams of information flow or eye-grabbing designs à la *Wired* magazine. The only illustrations are in the chapter on facilities planning by Delmus Williams, which includes photos of an early Univac computer and Durer's woodcut of Erasmus. Neither of these seems a particularly good illustration of either future technology or Hawkins's point of view that the library is not a place. There is, however, an index, a list of contributors with their affiliations, and an extensive bibliography.—*Gillian M. McCombs, University at Albany, State University of New York*