

context of such complexity, the index provides insufficient subject guidance. In short, this work is an indirect and convoluted read, not recommended for a day at the beach.—*Albert F. Bartovics, Harvard Business School, Boston.*

Documenting Cultural Diversity in the Resurgent American South: Collectors, Collecting, and Collections. Eds. Margaret R. Dittamore and Fred J. Hay. Chicago: ACRL, 1997. 122p. \$21 alk. paper (\$17.50 ACRL members) (ISBN 0-8389-7897-5). LC 97-3357.

How does one know the past? Beyond that, how do individuals or groups rephrase and shape changing identities, particularly when those individuals or groups have been, to greater or lesser extents, marginalized? Political documents, journalistic records, personal journals, and letters have informed the written records exemplified by our libraries' holdings of mainstream history books, thereby positing histories as understood by the more educated, and politically and economically powerful, elements of society. Groups such as Louisiana's Cajuns, or Isleños, or upland South Primitive Baptists make and retain their histories and changing identities differently, through orality and folklife practices. Their changing identities intertwine with the culture and histories of both mainstream and nonmainstream groups in complex ways. Regional mythologies and folklore have been emblematic of the American South probably more than of any other region: When not trivialized or caricatured, Southern folk cultures have been loved nearly to death, as in Cajun cooking or "quaint" mountain music. At times, they have been perceptively recognized as expressive art, and outside observers as well as members of diverse groups within the South have amassed invaluable documentation of indigenous history and folk traditions. How this documentation is to be

preserved, understood, and interpreted is the salient question addressed by folklorists and archivists in this important collection of essays.

Editors Margaret R. Dittamore and Fred J. Hay have selected key papers from two conference programs of the Anthropology and Sociology Section of the ACRL. Part I deals with issues of documentation of southern folk culture through strategies such as film, sound recording of musical traditions, and oral history. Part II focuses on one state, Louisiana, and demonstrates how documentary material can be used to reinforce often beleaguered cultural identities by giving a more authentic and resonant voice to these groups vis-à-vis the greater culture.

The contributors address both practical questions of creating, locating, preserving, indexing, cataloguing, and making available archival and documentary material; and larger issues of interpretation and misinterpretation, advocacy, and interfacing of folklife materials with other materials in reaching fuller understandings of people, history, and cultures. In their illuminating paper, "Talk about Trouble!: Documentation of Virginia Culture," Nancy J. Martin-Perdue and Charles L. Perdue Jr., draw on their long-time study of WPA Federal Writers Project interview material from Virginia in the 1930s and early 1940s. They found these materials to be scattered in numerous locations, usually disorganized, frequently in deteriorating condition. One archivist referred to WPA material in his care as "that JUNK in the basement." Beyond the immediate problems of locating, sorting through, and indexing the material, the Perdues alert us that we must not take this fascinating and rich body of oral history at face value, as it usually represents what they term "negotiated biography"—due to the "unequal relations that existed between the person whose life was narrated and the

writer of that person's life history." They also use their own folklore fieldwork to illustrate the fact that WPA workers frequently blurred the boundaries between expressive folk culture and factual and historical information.

In her essay, "Journals and Voices: Mosaics of Community," Elizabeth Rauh Bethel also seeks a broader view by integrating her fieldwork with the written historical record, as she puts it, "awakening to the resonant connection between two forms of data: the journals, ledgers and other written records of the past; and the voices of the present, that reflect on and preserve the memories of a shared heritage." One form balances and corrects the other; the voices of the living "old heads" in the black community of Promised Land in South Carolina revealed textures of experience unavailable through the written record. Yet even the sensitive fieldworker was mistaken in assuming that the name *Promised Land* referred to a spiritual concept; really, the old-timers informed her, it meant that their forebears "promised to pay for it, but never did"—and discovery of South Carolina Land Commission documents verified their oral testimony.

Other forms of documentation are discussed by Daniel W. Patterson in "A Case for the Folklife Documentary Film" and in Beverly Patterson's paper, "Bridging the Gap: An Indexing Project for Folk Music Recordings." Daniel Patterson explores the gamut of folklife films dealing with the South, from works of dubious value and authenticity to films that may be too specialized for wide appeal. He finds that some of the most interesting and valuable films have been collaborations, as when documentary film artist Les Blank worked with collector Chris Strachwitz on the survey of Cajun music, *J'ai Eté au Bal*, and with folklorist Cece Conway on *Sprout Wings and Fly*, a fine documentary film on traditional mountain musi-

cian Tommy Jarrell. Patterson laments difficulties in locating films in a systematic way and argues that it is partly the diversified nature of the folklore discipline, ranging through academia, arts agencies, independent enthusiasts and producers, and museums: "Although the field is bubbling with activity, it lacks a unified voice." In a way, this may be just as well, although more accessibility and greater articulation of standards are needed.

Beverly Patterson calls attention to the wealth of important southern traditional music that was issued on commercial LPs during the heyday of that format; these are rapidly becoming difficult to access and are in danger of nearly disappearing as a resource. Most were compiled as labors of love by enthusiasts, collectors, folklorists—this reviewer had a hand in several—and libraries need to heed Patterson's exhortation to obtain these recordings while it is still possible, as well as the equipment for their preservation and use.

The very subtitle of the program at which the second group of papers published here was read, "Empowering People through Diversity," using as it does two current buzzwords, suggests a more political and less complex scholarly analysis than the papers discussed above. There are potential pitfalls when identity politics are linked to artistic or scholarly work, but the writers here strive for a healthy balance and correction of past distortions and inadequacies, and back their advocacy with sound research. Florence E. Borders brings to light new historical material that demonstrates that many Afro-Louisiana women, both free and slave, in pre-Emanicipation times had notable entrepreneurial and other accomplishments that belie long-accepted stereotypes.

Borders's work is one of advocacy and pride "without apology" of what Afro-Louisiana women achieved "against the odds." Likewise, the late

Ulysses S. Ricard Jr. detailed the successes of Creole blacks in Louisiana, slave and free; of the latter, he maintained that their "accomplishments in military, economic, literary, and artistic endeavors were not matched by any other free blacks in the United States." Ricard expressed the hope that the archives he worked with at the Amistad Research Center "can be used, directly and indirectly, to combat racism and prejudice."

Like all the participants in the Louisiana meeting, Marcia Gaudet grew up in the culture she discusses, in her case that of the Cajun culture, whose history she outlines and describes as being a diverse group defying "one-dimensional" stereotypes. She recognizes, but has difficulty in working through, the complexities of folk traditions being revived in the flare of media attention and local promotion; her example is the Cajun Mardi Gras. She quotes folklorist Barry Ancelet's view that the colorful masked ritual really "invert[s] reality and mock[s] the observer." Gaudet indicates that documentary material and folklore studies are essential in moving to a multidimensional understanding. The striking photographs of the Cajun Mardi Gras by Irby Gaudet III, reproduced in the book, are eloquent documents of a tradition continuing to evolve in the 1990s. Another very direct expression is Irvan Perez's actual singing of *Decimas*, the old and new topical and lyric songs of the Spanish-speaking south Louisiana Isleños community in which he grew up. Preceded by a brief history of his culture, the songs are the real heart of Perez's presentation.

Probably due to the necessarily limited focus of the meetings that produced the papers here published, some important topics are not dealt with: folk material culture and visual art (these are usually in the domain of museums rather than libraries and archives); new modes of documentation such as self-docu-

mentation of families, groups, cultures, through video; and the computer revolution as it documents and proliferates information about previously localized cultures (e.g., Georgia's McIntosh County Shouters, practitioners of the coastal slave ring-shout tradition, now have their own Web site). If new conferences and publications covering these topics are as insightful and well edited as this one, they will be doing a great service to the library and archiving profession, the general public, and especially the groups whose histories and cultures need to be both preserved and better understood.—*Art Rosenbaum, University of Georgia, Athens.*

Eshelman, William R. *No Silence!: A Library Life*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow, 1997. 340p. \$59 alk. paper (ISBN 0-8108-3241-0). LC 96-53095.

My old friend Eshelman's memoir works best if you read it the way it appears that he wrote it, back and forth in time and picking and choosing events and places to build emphases and relationships for yourself. It may be that age and experience, plus an ample dose of the "library press" as practiced by him, Eric Moon, Kathleen Molz, Art Plotnik, Gerry Shields, and others is a prerequisite for full understanding. Hold on, though, this is no *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, it is primary source material in library history, and you have to mine it to get the ore. I did not begin at the beginning, although that early life and the hardships of a pacifist, conscientious objector in World War II gives the reader perspective on the rest of the story.

I looked for material that would enrich my own memory and understanding of all that has happened. I wanted to smelt and refine out the metal of some professional and personal history I had lived. I wanted to test some sympathetic, but not identical, perspectives from a point of view with which I agree, against