

needs of teenage girls, and it holds the potential to inform decisions regarding serials subscriptions for collections that serve adolescents. A copy should be in all women's studies collections.—*Florence M. Jumonville, University of New Orleans.*

Goldman, Alvin I. *Knowledge in a Social World.* New York: Oxford Univ. Pr., 1999. 407p. \$70, alk. paper, cloth (ISBN 0-1982-3777-4); \$19.95 paper (ISBN 0-1982-3820-7). LC 98-43283.

Alvin Goldman, professor of philosophy at the University of Arizona, seeks to evaluate social institutions and practices on the basis of how well they increase human knowledge, as opposed to ignorance and error. His conception of knowledge involves a strong commitment to truth, which he calls "veritism." For Goldman, knowledge is defined as *true* belief, not merely accepted belief or opinion. What makes a belief true is its having the right kind of relationship to the world or reality; putting it baldly, if a belief matches reality, it is true. What we seek when we seek knowledge is true belief. Institutions and practices that foster true belief are good and should be promoted; institutions and practices that result in false belief (error) or the absence of true belief (ignorance) are bad and should be avoided or corrected. Science is, for Goldman, an example of a social practice that has good prospects for leading us to knowledge, whereas the news programming of commercially oriented media companies has less of a chance for leading us to true belief and is, therefore, a candidate for correction or regulation.

The author seeks to distance himself from contemporary thinkers who profess various forms of skepticism about truth in the form of social constructivism, postmodernism, cultural relativism, or the sociology of knowledge. Claiming that these thinkers suffer from "veriphobia," Goldman devotes a chapter to exposing the flaws in their arguments. He proceeds to explain in detail the theory of truth that he advocates, and

he outlines a framework for employing it in the evaluation of social practices. He then applies the theory to social practices in general, including testimony (the transmission of observed information from one person to others), the technology and economics of communication, and speech regulation. Special attention is devoted to four special domains: science, law, democracy, and education. Goldman's ambitious work is both theoretical and practical, descriptive and normative: he develops a truth-linked social epistemology in rich philosophical detail, he then evaluates social practices on the basis of how well they produce true beliefs.

Goldman's epistemology may arouse surprise and suspicion in librarians, many of whom would be classified as "constructivist veriphobes" in his terminology. When any theory of knowledge is articulated by librarians at all, it is usually a form of constructivism in which knowledge is distinguished from information by a cognitive operation of the user, sometimes referred to as constructing meaning. According to this view, the library user takes information (raw data) and does something to it (processes it, interprets it, manipulates it, forms an understanding of it) and thus transforms information into knowledge. When this process is performed collectively by credentialed individuals organized into disciplines, librarians refer to it as scholarly communication. The purpose of the research library is to aid scholarly communication and the production of new knowledge so defined. The notion that knowledge is connected to any normative concept such as truth is usually left out of the equation. When librarians of the constructivist bent do speak of truth, they are likely to understand it in terms of social consensus or agreement rather than a belief's having the right relationship to the world. A truth-linked epistemology such as Goldman's would therefore arouse the suspicion that it would result in the privileging of one group's truth over another's.

Although librarians sometimes speak as though they are social constructivists, librarian practice in fact looks a lot like Goldman's veritism. Take, for example, the accuracy literature in the evaluation of reference services. For more than thirty years, library and information science researchers have evaluated reference service in terms of the accuracy of librarian responses to user questions, where accuracy is defined as the correct or true answer in Goldman's sense. When reference services do not result in a sufficient increase in true belief (the 55 percent rule), strategies are devised (follow-up questions) to improve and correct the practice. If Goldman is correct, librarians should continue this type of research and correcting practice instead of focusing exclusively on non-truth-based concepts of evaluation such as user satisfaction. One application of Goldman's theory could be a comparison of the truth-producing practice of reference librarians with the ability of Internet search engines to provide accurate answers to a user's query per unit of user time.

Goldman's work also has implications for collection development and library instruction. He applies his veritistic epistemology to issues such as the peer review of electronic publications, recent copyright legislation, collaborative learn-

ing, and critical thinking—reaching conclusions that most often back up librarian practice in these areas. The one weakness of this book is that in attempting to cover such broad territory, Goldman's practical proposals are sometimes lacking in details and specifics. Veriphobes and veritists alike, however, will benefit from the clarity of Goldman's analysis of the thorny issues surrounding truth, knowledge, and social practice.—*Marc Meola, Temple University.*

Print Culture in a Diverse America. Ed. James P. Danky and Wayne A. Wiegand. Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Pr. (History of Communication Series), 1998. 291p. \$49.95, acid-free paper, cloth (ISBN 0-2520-2398-6); \$27.95 paper (ISBN 0-2520-6699-5). LC 97-33935.

The emerging field of print cultural studies has been greatly enhanced by the publication of this new work. The editors have assembled a collection of important essays that were presented during the first conference—in 1995, in Madison, Wisconsin—of the Center for the History of Print Culture in Modern America. The result of their labors is an anthology of ideas about the value of print, in its variant forms, that is groundbreaking in establishing linkages between libraries, cultural communities, and the printed word.

In his introduction, Wayne Wiegand succinctly describes a "rapidly emerging scholarship on reading within a much broader shift in the focus of humanities research 'from culture as text to culture as agency and practice.'" Print cultural studies can be viewed as "one manifestation" of this movement. Yet, Wiegand is quick to remind the reader that scholarship in this emerging field has, to a large degree, excluded close investigation and analysis of the twentieth century, a time period marked by a rapid increase in the utility of print among America's culturally diverse populations. Investigation of print culture in this century is also complicated by an array of media that include newspapers

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