

REVIEWS

Communal Cuisine, Community Cookbooks, 1877–1960. Virtual exhibit, <http://www.library.uiuc.edu/learn/Exhibit/index.htm>. Created and maintained by MERINDA KAYE HENSLEY. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

“For time immemorial women have been feeding our endless hunger.”¹ So begins the story told by the community cookbook exhibit at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Although not unique, this exhibit is certainly an excellent look at community cookbooks and their role in Midwestern society from the 1870s to the 1960s. As the collector of community cookbooks for the Iowa State University Library, it was exciting to examine another collection of community cookbooks. As the exhibit Web page states, “the intent of community (sometimes referred to as charity, regional or fund-raising) cookbooks is to compile the culinary resources of the women in a community to raise money for a particular cause.”² Community cookbooks can be read as a chronicle of American history and domestic life, providing insight into the way food was prepared, food choices were made, and food trends came and went.

This online exhibit, created by Merinda Kaye Hensley, attempts to answer the questions, What is a community cookbook? and What’s available at the University of Illinois? The exhibit is intended for a general audience, particularly persons interested in the history of cooking and especially in those cookbooks created by community organizations. Unlike some of the other regionally limited collections included in the exhibit’s list of online culinary resources, such as the *Rutgers University Sinclair Jerseyana Cookbooks*,³ this collection includes cooking books from around the United States and features the collection/gift of a single person, Hermilda Listeman, an area businesswoman who in 2000 donated her entire cookbook collection of over 2,300 books, including over 700 community cookbooks, to the University of Illinois.

Listeman’s collection includes cookbooks published from the mid-1870s to the 1990s, representing almost every state in the union. According to Hensley, the women who published these books belonged to church groups, ladies’ aid societies, garden clubs, libraries, YWCAs, junior leagues, and political groups. She says that “overwhelmingly, most of these community cookbooks raised money for local churches, but there are books dedicated to funding libraries, hospitals and homes for the poor and ‘friendless.’ Most of the early books have paper covers and are bound by staples or glue while the newer editions are printed on more resilient papers with plastic comb bindings.”⁴ As was my experience in sorting the materials

1. Anne L. Bower, *Recipes for Reading: Community Cookbooks, Stories and Histories* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), p. 20.
2. Merinda Kaye Hensley, “Introduction: What Is a Community Cookbook?” <http://www.library.uiuc.edu/learn/Exhibit/page1.htm>.
3. Rutgers University Libraries: Sinclair Jerseyana Collection. Virtual exhibit, http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/libs/scua/sinclair/sinclair_cook_books_mair.
4. Merinda Kaye Hensley. “The Culinary Collection of Hermilda Listeman.” <http://www.library.uiuc.edu/learn/Exhibit/page9.htm>.

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donated to the Iowa State University library that became the Iowa Cookbook Collection, Merinda noted that the cookbooks “are stuffed with ephemera; clippings from magazines, recipes jotted on torn pieces of paper, personal cards, business cards, invitations, advertisements, and even rent receipts. They are stained with a long ago cooked meal, colored in crayon by a child’s hand. Sometimes they have the name of an owner on the inside cover; they sometimes include a date—could it be an acquisition date? Frequently there are notes to the receiver, indicating the book was a gift. They are littered with marginalia, indicating whether or not this recipe is ‘good’ . . . and most frequently, alterations to the ingredients list.”⁵

This virtual collection features sixty-two cookbooks and is arranged to accompany the physical exhibit displayed at the university during June and July 2006, but the examples also stand on their own as a virtual exhibit. Sections of the virtual exhibit include information explaining the whys of collecting community cookbooks and what one can learn from reading them, as well as illustrated examples of the books included in this particular exhibit by time period. Time periods featured include 1877–1900, 1901–4, 1915–30, 1931–45, and 1946–60. Although the Web pages were set up to follow the display, they also offer short explanations of the books they feature. Each page includes a thumbnail illustration of a book and a short description. It is easy to navigate from one page to the next; however, the viewer wants more, and the thumbnail illustrations of the covers do not enlarge, making them unreadable. In addition, no internal page examples were used.

The purpose of the exhibit, according to Hensley, was to show examples of the materials included in the Listeman gift; however, much of the exhibit text pertains to community cookbook collections, and it wasn’t always clear to this viewer what the relationship of the Listeman gift was to the total Illinois collection of cookbooks. Hensley has done an excellent job of explaining the importance of community cookbooks to the history of an era and the legacy they leave documenting the way people really lived and interacted with food. The exhibit is easy to view, and although it doesn’t have any of the bells and whistles of some of the other online exhibits related to community cookbooks, such as *Feeding America* at Michigan State University or Cornell University’s *Not by Bread Alone: America’s Culinary History*, it functions effectively for this exhibit, although as I mentioned it would have been a bonus if the thumbnail sketches could have been enlarged for better viewing.⁶ One of the big pluses of this exhibit is the excellent bibliography of materials related to community cookbooks and the list of online culinary resources featuring links to many of the other online historical cookbook projects. The resource list includes links to other collections of community cookbooks as well as to a variety of other materials related to cooking, such as the Smithsonian Institution’s *Key Ingredients: America by Food*, a companion Web site to the traveling exhibit of the same name that focuses on the traditional and international influences on American cuisine.

This virtual exhibit was launched to accompany a physical exhibit mounted in the hallway of the university’s Main Library during June and July 2006 and now remains as a static online exhibit. Although I visited this online exhibit a number of times in the process of writing this review in the period between October 2006

5. Ibid.

6. For Michigan State University’s “Feeding America: The Historic American Cookbook Project,” a virtual exhibit, see <http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/>; for Cornell University’s “Not by Bread Alone: America’s Culinary Heritage,” a virtual exhibit, see <http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/food/default.htm>.

and April 2007, it hasn't changed since it was mounted. The creator, Merinda Kaye Hensley, indicated that although the physical exhibit has been dismantled the virtual exhibit will remain on the Web, and there are no plans to enlarge either the exhibit or the university's cookbook collection.

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The Library as Place: History, Community, and Culture. Edited by JOHN E. BUSCHMAN and GLORIA J. LECKIE. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2007. Pp. viii + 260. \$50.00 (paper). ISBN 1-59158-382-9.

Invited by the *Library Quarterly's* coeditors, Wayne Wiegand and John Carlo Bertot, to guest edit a themed issue on "library as place," John Buschman and Gloria Leckie accepted the offer and issued a call for papers. They anticipated a small sample from which they would select six to make up the issue. In fact, they received over thirty submissions and reported to Wiegand and Bertot that they did not wish to limit themselves to six. Instead, they asked to publish the essays in a separately issued monograph (p. vii). Wiegand and Bertot happily agreed.

This book of diverse essays deserves a broad audience among those committed to more closely connecting their libraries and information agencies with the communities they serve. Many chapter authors have successfully contextualized their various interpretations of "library as place" in the broader scholarly literature of place theory. Beginning with "Space, Place, and Libraries: An Introduction," Buschman and Leckie provide readers with an excellent grounding in the historiography of place. They build a framework for the essays that follow from geography, sociology, urban studies, and Jurgen Habermas's work on the public sphere, Buschman's special area of interest (John Buschman, *Dismantling the Public Sphere: Situating and Sustaining Librarianship in the Age of the New Philosophy* [Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2003]). The balance of the book is organized thematically into four sections, "The Library's Place in the Past," "Libraries as Places of Community," "Research Libraries as Places of Learning and Scholarship," and "Libraries, Place, and Culture." Individual chapters all fit well in their sections.

The first section offers explorations of British army garrison libraries and U.S. social libraries in the nineteenth century, as well as the story of a Canadian library, Vancouver's Carnegie Library, through the twentieth century. In "Beneficial Spaces: The Rise of Military Libraries in the British Empire," Ronald Tetreault documents that garrison libraries were places where reading was encouraged as a means of "cultivating the intellectual and moral capacities of those meant to serve in the enterprise of the empire" (p. 30).

In "Libraries in Public before the Age of Public Libraries: Interpreting the Furnishings and Design of Athenaeums and Other 'Social Libraries,' 1800–1860," Adam Arenson uses sociologist Ray Oldenburg's third-place theory and Benedict Anderson's notion of imagined communities to explain the nature of nineteenth-century social library space as neutral ground. This space, neither public nor private, was where young men of like mind gathered to read newspapers surrounded by congenial company, whether they conversed with others present or not (Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafés, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts, and How They Get You through the Day* [New York: Paragon, 1989]; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. [London: Verso, 1991]).