

[\[Review\] *Academic Libraries: Their Rationale and Role in American Higher Education*, edited by Gerald B. McCabe and Ruth J. Person.](#)

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[Carmichael, J.V., Jr.](#) (1996) [Review] *Academic Libraries: Their Rationale and Role in American Higher Education*, edited by Gerald B. McCabe and Ruth J. Person. *The Serials Librarian* 29, nos. 1/2: 219-20. DOI: [10.1300/J123v29n01_13](#)

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ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: THEIR RATIONALE AND ROLE IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION.
Edited by Gerard B. McCabe and Ruth J. Person (Contributions in Librarianship and Information Science, no. 84). Westport, CT. Greenwood Publishing Group, 1995. xiii, 2.30 p. \$55.00. ISBN 0-313-28597-7.

Another book of essays on the dysfunctions of academic libraries? Hardly. There is certainly no paucity of books on the subject, nor of ephemera which addresses the technological revolution (the real thrust of this volume), but none to date achieves quite the blend of fundamental statements on various aspects of the library with prescient and much-needed updates of potential and probable impact of change on the delivery of campus library service. The twelve essays herein purport to describe the present state of the academic library while imparting "a superior understanding of the issues facing the library and ... the proper role it should have on . . . campuses" (p. x). They do not disappoint, and the selection of authors yields a nice balance of discussion between the large university, private colleges, and community colleges, thus proving the point that the "change mode" affects all academic environments equally. Nearly all authors should be familiar to regular readers of academic library literature, but even so, it is unusual to see such uniformly high quality throughout, even from superstars, as they address the old chestnuts: administration, staffing, funding, education for librarianship, management, collection development, organization, and the impact of technology and the future. Several of them (Joanne R. Euster on the role of the academic library; Lloyd W. Chapin and Larry Hardesty on the deans' view of the library; Carla J. Store and Kathleen Weibel on funding; and a delightful coda framed as a conversation between librarian, computing director, and the chief academic officer by Paul M. Gherman and Robert C. Heterick) deserve classic status. Charles T. Townley's essay on designing effective library organizations may be unique in library literature in its focus on design, and the identification of the process of modifying the management structures. As in any edited volume, there are slight anachronisms: the useful annotated bibliography which, with an index, completes the volume, draws on items from the period 1989-92, while several of the essays contain bibliographic references as recent as 1994. The collection development essay, which from references would seem to cover the literature up to 1993, does not mention document delivery services, which makes the reader pause over a phrase like "In the past five years ... " (p. 104). One misses extensive discussion of the impact of distance education until the last third (p. 170) of the volume. These are minor points, and no doubt reflect publishing practices more than they do editorial or authorial oversight. The volume is extremely well-edited and indexed, and should prove indispensable to academic librarians, library educators (whether they teach an academic library course or not), and academic officers.