

Multicultural acquisitions

Derek Whitehead finds that it's not the same thing at all in the USA

The table of contents of this book finds three different ways to spell 'multicultural'; the book itself embodies at least as many ways of understanding the concept, few of them familiar to Australian readers.

Multicultural acquisitions is about many things, but it is *not* about multicultural acquisitions. It aims to provide 'a broad basis for all levels of librarianship to develop collections addressing multiculturalism.' The emphasis is on 'broad' and only two of the articles in the book are specifically about acquisitions (both on Spanish-language materials). Its twenty articles range across:

- school, public and academic libraries;
- material for children, adolescents and adults;
- material for and about minority groups (including women, gays and lesbians);
- government publications, non-print resources and reference books;
- education for librarianship;
- statistical studies and surveys; and other topics as well.

Katz (well known as a prolific editor of library reference books) and Parrish have produced the book in the context of a current debate in the United States about multiculturalism, a term which has gained currency there relatively recently. They focus on the role of libraries in facilitating social change, as contrasted with their historic 'neutrality' on social issues. Their stance is that 'libraries have a responsibility to provide services and materials appropriate to the communities they serve, but must remain neutral in response to social issues.' In other words, they support some provision of 'bilingual materials' (i.e. in languages other than English), but oppose promotion of the concept of a multicultural society.

This is a very American book. Within Australia, there is a broader multicultural consensus in libraries. Australian librarians who need guidance on buying books in other languages—what's around, where to find it, who to buy it

from, and how—should wait for the second edition of *Buying books in other languages*, now being compiled by Anne Holmes and Sabina Robertson.

Multicultural acquisitions is not well edited, the content is patchy, there is no index and no bibliography, although many individual articles are well annotated. However, even if it is not what its title leads us to believe, has unclear purposes, and is focused closely on the

United States, it does contain lots of useful information. Any library with a solid collection on multicultural library services should acquire it.

Multicultural acquisitions is edited by Karen Parrish and Bill Katz and published by The Haworth Press, 1993. 322 pp. US\$39.95 board (US\$31.95 pbk); ISBN 1-56024-451-8. Published simultaneously as *The acquisitions librarian* Nos 9/10. ■

New from Jocelyne Scutt

Janet Wilson reviews *The sexual gerrymander*

This collection of eighteen chapters brings together some of this feminist lawyer's addresses, essays and articles from the period 1979 to 1990. In each chapter Scutt has provided an introduction bringing the material up to date and describing the occasion, in the case of speeches.

The first part, *The herstory of history*, contains four addresses and is aimed at showing the part of women in making Australian history and the denial of that role by many historians.

The second part, the meatiest, comprises seven chapters dealing with violence against women, ranging from domestic sexual assaults to a remembrance for women raped in war. It is designed to show how the framing and interpretation of the law not only fails to protect women from violence but also promotes physical and economic violence against them.

Up from under, the final part, pays tribute to the women's movement by showing that the fate of women is now less likely to be ignored in 'remaking the world'. It includes recommendations in the areas of sexual assault, economics, education the law and housing.

It is in the chapters on violence, and particularly those dealing with sexual violence against women, that Scutt's ex-

tensive scholarship is most evident. She clearly delineates the legal framework and analyses cases, incidence and the problem of the discrimination built into the criminal law as it deals with violence against women, giving numerous examples.

Scutt takes a somewhat extreme and unfashionable view of pornography and it is difficult to reconcile her anti-pornography stance, either with freedom of speech or with freedom of choice.

The collection is a valuable one, both for the general reader with an interest in the social, economic and political discrimination against women, and for institutions teaching women's studies. (Scutt incidentally discusses the shift of language where *gender* became the substitute word for *sex*.) Each chapter is thoroughly footnoted, with additional entries for this edition and the well constructed index runs to seven pages. Overall, it is a readable, thoughtful and thought-provoking collection.

(A minor quibble: was the Melbourne YWCA's Anzac Day Forum really held on 25 August 1984?)

The sexual gerrymander: women and the economics of power. North Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1994. 290 pp. \$26.95 ISBN 1 875559 16 7. ■