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Smith, A. A. (2017). **Capturing Our Stories: An Oral History of Librarianship in Transition**. Chicago, IL: Neal-Schuman. With a foreword by Lorienne Roy (pp. vii-x).

In 2007-2008, Dr. Lorienne Roy, a professor in the University of Texas at Austin's School of Information, served as President of the American Library Association; as such, she traveled around the country spreading the good word about libraries. In these trips, she "heard about impending retirements of librarians known for their professional contributions" and she "grew concerned about the lack of a conduit by which their life lessons could be gathered" (Roy, 2017, p. ix). As ALA President, Roy elected to initiate an oral history program for retiring librarians, which she called "Capturing Our Stories."

By a happy coincidence, Arro Smith, a cataloguer since 1990 at the San Marcos (Texas) Public Library and a former student of Dr. Roy's, was inspired by her to return to university to earn his doctorate. His 2013 dissertation, *Capturing the Social Memory of Librarianship* (<https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/21671>), is the basis for this book that made Dr. Roy's presidential initiative a reality. Smith's work relied on oral history interviews, mostly available as videos with printed transcripts, and can be found at <https://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~stories/>.

The book itself is in two parts. The first, "Capturing Our Stories," is broken into six chapters: "Becoming a Librarian," "Cliché and Stereotype," "Technology Memories," "Regrets," "Helping People," and finally "The Collective Memory of Librarianship." The second part, "How to Capture Stories," includes one theoretical chapter, "A Primer on Oral History Theory and Methodology," and a second chapter called "Practical Oral History Advice." Smith (2017) himself comments that readers should "feel free to skip [the second part of the book] unless you are working on a formal, scholarly project" (p. 143). In fact, these chapters might better have been published as articles in an academic journal since they seem out of place in a book that invites readers to enjoy some folksy reminiscences.

In preparing each chapter for the first part of the book, Smith analyzed the transcripts of the oral interviews his team of interviewers had generated, identified interesting excerpts, and then organized these excerpts into chapters, setting them amidst his own comments. The book is not, in other words, an edited version of individual transcripts.

Among its more interesting chapters is “Technology Memories,” which tells how libraries have evolved from print-based institutions of the late ‘60s into the technology powerhouses of today—and how those changes have affected both technical and public services: truly “librarianship in transition.”

That said, the book is not as strong as it could have been. Some of the experiences reported here are anodyne—in the section “Becoming a Librarian,” for example, readers will not be shocked to learn that some librarians decided on their careers because they were introduced to books at a young age by an enthusiastic public librarian, or that others had tried teaching but preferred library work—and so on. Similar comments could be made about some of the other chapters including, for example, “Helping People”—not much evidence of “librarianship in transition” here!

More seriously, the book’s subtitle also implies that it is an “oral history of librarianship,” and that it is not. Although those associated with academic, school, and special libraries do make an appearance, the emphasis is on public librarians’ work (no doubt reflecting the author’s own background). Further, while one of the more interesting chapters, “Regrets,” references “Funding and Compensation” as well as “Sexism,” an academic librarian reading about bad salaries will note the absence of any reference to unions, much less to the evolution of faculty status in higher education and how that significantly improved salaries for many librarians. The sexism stories seem all too true—but one misses stories about racism that was probably experienced by some black American, and yes, Dr. Roy, Indigenous librarians. In addition, no mention is made of struggles for LGBTQ rights that were a part of other librarians’ experiences throughout North America. And hey, it’s America and there is not a word about guns in the library.

The reason for such gaps is obvious: the book is only as good as its sources. While it is based on “captured stories” of roughly 35 librarians, many of those captured are from Texas librarians. While their experiences may overlap with those of other librarians across North America, this is not necessarily the case. In fairness, the website encourages librarians from around the country to participate in the project either as interviewers or as interviewees and, with time, it may well develop into the rich resource originally envisaged by Lorie Roy.

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