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Reading Places: Literacy, Democracy and the Public Library in Cold War America

Joan Bessman Taylor
University of Iowa

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important features so readers can see the organizational structure of a farmhouse kitchen.

Dorothy Harchanko provides 34 pages of recipes and instructions for everything from lye soap to canning meat to millet biscuits to cookies. In today's world of prepared foods, readers are enriched by the sheer variety of foods created at a time that did not include toasters, microwaves, or refrigeration. The only way to cook was to physically stoke the fire in the stove — a job that fell to Artley and his brothers.

Much of the strength of this book is in what we don't see written, but what we can infer. Iowa farmers faced economic hardships during the 1920s and were particularly hard hit during the Great Depression. But in Artley's memories, we feel little deprivation. Only once does he refer to the stressful times of the Depression. In those difficult times, surely the parents struggled to make ends meet, but instead we see his parents keeping careful ledgers. During the Depression, many families went hungry from time to time. Here we see Father leading the evening prayer, thanking God for their dinner, whereas the very fact that the family had dinner every night was a testament to their own hard work. In fact, the dinners Artley's mother served from the larder — sausage and millet muffins — were some of his favorite meals.

There's yet another story within this story. In 2010, Artley was 93 years old and suffered a series of strokes, so the book was completed by his children and stepchildren. The result is a revealing memoir of life on an Iowa farm during the Great Depression.

Reading Places: Literacy, Democracy and the Public Library in Cold War America, by Christine Pawley. *Studies in Print Culture and the History of the Book*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010. xi, 325 pp. Tables, notes, appendixes, index. \$80.00 cloth, \$28.95 paper.

Reviewer Joan Bessman Taylor is assistant professor of library and information science at the University of Iowa. Her research and writing have focused on the history of reading and readers and the promotion of reading.

To call Christine Pawley's most recent book-length contribution to print culture studies a case study of Wisconsin's Door-Kewaunee Regional Library Demonstration of 1950–1952 is to obfuscate its scope and insight into the creation of official literacy policies and how these intersect with constructions of identity, citizenship, and freedom. It functions on dual dimensions: as a tale of library and reading history in Wisconsin — a history sharing similarities with other midwestern states — and as an argument for historians to conduct what Pawley terms “a middle layer of analysis” examining the organizational con-

text as a link between individuals and wider social and cultural conditions (16).

In the late 1940s, the Wisconsin Free Library Commission (WFLC), a state agency created to support public libraries, recognized the disparities in service across the state and planned a demonstration of ideal library service in a rural area. It was thought that if people could see the benefits of high-quality library service in action, they would be more likely to support funding for libraries through local taxes. This demonstration involved establishing a regional library that would provide a wider range of services than individual towns or villages could, a key component of which would be a bookmobile traveling to the most remote locations. The adjoining counties of Door and Kewaunee, together forming the Door Peninsula, were selected as the site for this experiment. At the conclusion of the three-year trial period, voters were asked to pass a referendum permitting the project to continue. Even in light of success evidenced by increased library circulation figures and improved reading scores of the rural grade-school children who used the bookmobile services in large numbers, reactions to the demonstration were mixed. Door County voted in favor of the tax levy, and its bookmobile continued for more than 30 years. Kewaunee County turned it down, halting the bookmobile service altogether. Pawley illuminates the motivations, satisfactions, frustrations, and fears of those involved through an analysis along three levels — societal, individual, and institutional.

Throughout *Reading Places*, Pawley emphasizes the importance of “locality and sociability in understanding the reading practices of ordinary Americans, particularly in the context of public policies designed to shape that reading” (28). Figuring prominently are differences in class, gender, and ethnicity and how these affect societal values. Imbued with disparate migrant experiences, Cold War-era Wisconsin was the site of much cultural conflict. Varying values governed everything from how time should be spent at home to what should be included in the curriculum of the one-room schoolhouses to the degree to which government should intervene in local affairs (including the allocation of federal dollars). Each of these influenced the divided reactions to the Door-Kewaunee Regional Library Demonstration.

Although primarily about library development in Wisconsin, the work establishes broader implications. The real need to extend rural library services was shared by neighboring states, as were concerns about what should (or should not) be read by whom and to what end. The efforts of the Iowa Library Association in the early 1950s, for instance, focused on lobbying for the Library Services Act (1956) in order

to secure federal funding for rural libraries. Even today, of the 542 public libraries in Iowa, 412 serve populations of less than 2,500. As a former resident of Iowa and author of *Reading on the Middle Border: The Culture of Print in Late-Nineteenth-Century Osage, Iowa*, Pawley relates many examples from events in Iowa, the Midwest, and the nation.

Beyond its illumination of the complex interactions and tensions historically influencing support for or opposition to libraries, factors still pertinent and recurring as libraries reinvent themselves in light of ubiquitous technology use and the current economic recession, *Reading Places* makes an equal or greater contribution in its lucidity regarding the research methods used to access that history. Pawley draws on newspaper coverage and interviews with more than 25 key individuals to vividly convey the experiences of those who were involved in the demonstration. She also uses often overlooked primary sources — institutional records, particularly library circulation records — to reveal patron borrowing patterns and individual reading choices, thereby providing comparisons to the claims made by the various stakeholders. Her inclusion of tables of circulation information and relevant statistics, as well as her precise descriptions of her methodological approach, serve as a model for scholars and researchers while elucidating the importance of retaining records that are routinely discarded. *Reading Places* is a timely call to action to print culture historians, library advocates, and anyone interested in the future of public archives.

Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry, by Tiffany M. Gill. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010. xi, 192 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$75.00 cloth, \$25.00 paper.

Reviewer Malia McAndrew is assistant professor of history at John Carroll University. Her Ph.D. dissertation (University of Maryland, 2008) was "All-American Beauty: The Experiences of African American, European American, and Japanese American Women with Beauty Culture in the Mid-Twentieth Century United States."

The politics of African American hair is a rich, vibrant subject of academic inquiry. In *Beauty Shop Politics*, historian Tiffany M. Gill moves the scholarship beyond its overemphasis on the political meanings of hair styling practices to examine the politics of beauticians themselves. Gill argues that beauty culture professions have historically served as important vehicles through which black women have advocated political change in America. By examining the lives of black beauticians, beauty school owners, and members of beauty culture associations, Gill