Book Review: *International Librarianship at Home and Abroad*

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What is meant by “international librarianship”? The term can be difficult to define, potentially encompassing a vast array of library activities, including collecting materials published abroad, participating in librarian exchanges, and attending international library conferences.

J. S. Parker’s classic 1974 definition of international librarianship, which author Karen Bordonaro includes in her book International Librarianship at Home and Abroad, is this: “International librarianship consists of activities carried out among or between governmental or non-governmental institutions, organizations, groups or individuals of two or more nations, to promote, establish, develop, maintain and evaluate library, documentation and allied services, and librarianship and the library profession generally, in any part of the world” (p. 4).

Bordonaro’s work springs from her own vastly more general definition, which is “one professional, many communities, connecting to each other to promote learning globally and locally” (p. 12). Bordonaro seeks to explore the views on international librarianship from practicing librarians worldwide, drawing on a 2016 online questionnaire and series of professional interviews she conducted with 320 participants worldwide.

The book includes an extensive literature review on the topic, including a useful list of core journals. Bordonaro then delves into a discussion of sources of current practices in the field, including standards and guidelines, professional associations, conferences, workshops, professional and educational programs, and so forth. Examples of an international focus in library collection development, preservation, and cataloging are also a focus, as well as partnership arrangements with libraries abroad.

The remainder of the book consists of a lengthy discussion and analysis of the results of Bordonaro’s research study. She identifies three major findings arising from the study: international librarianship can take many forms, international librarianship can be practiced at home, and reframing attitudes is an important part of international librarianship.

In summary, International Librarianship at Home and Abroad is an interesting, well-researched overview of current literature and perceptions, but it serves as more of an armchair perspective of the landscape rather than a firsthand account. Librarians interested in perspectives from the field might consult recent works such as Constantia Constantiou, Michael J. Miller, and Kenneth Schlesinger’s International Librarianship: Developing Professional, Intercultural, and Educational Leadership (SUNY Press, 2017) and Peter Johan Lor’s International and Comparative Librarianship: A Thematic Approach (de Gruyter, 2014).—Jennifer A. Bartlett, Interim Associate Dean of Teaching, Learning, and Research, University of Kentucky Libraries, Lexington