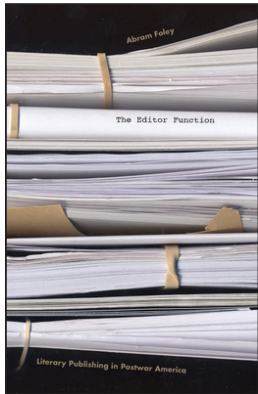


Book Reviews



Abram Foley. *The Editor Function: Literary Publishing in Postwar America*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2021. 224p. Paper, \$25.00 (ISBN: 978-1517911676).



In *The Editor Function: Literary Publishing in Postwar America*, Abram Foley, a lecturer in English with a background in editing, embarks on the immense and complicated task of documenting the practice of postwar publishing and its theoretical underpinnings. Writing in response to academic criticism's focus on the corporatization of US postwar publishing and omission of print culture in histories of postwar US literature, Foley centers the specific circumstances of individual editors, particularly those involved with smaller-scale, independent publications. Foley's main thesis is that "editing...advances its own legible theories of textuality and meaning-making" (5). This editorial practice is historically situated and diverse in form, as Foley shows in his analysis of five case studies in the subsequent chapters. Each chapter combines close readings of texts written and published by the central editors with texts that inform these works. Foley illustrates how these "textual theories" inform and stem from "the workaday tasks of editing" (19).

Chapter 1, "Editing and the Open Field: Charles Olson's Letters to Editors," documents the correspondence between Olson and Cid Corman, a poet and editor of the literary journal *Origin*. Foley focuses on a 1951 letter written by Olson in response to the publication of the first issue of *Origin*, where Olson displays a growing interest in editing and collaboration between editors and authors, expanding on his investments displayed in several poetic letters responding to an issue of the literary journal *4 Winds*. Foley effectively explains how Olson's consideration of editing affects his theorization of poetics through a close reading of Olson's poetry and the bibliography to his book *Mayan Letters*.

The second chapter details the formation of the Dalkey Archive Press and *Review of Contemporary Fiction*. John O'Brien designed both to combat other presses letting the works of lesser-known authors go out of print, resulting in a lack of academic writing or teaching about these authors and their works. Foley describes the relationship between O'Brien and author and editor Gilbert Sorrentino, who inspired O'Brien to create the press to "counter then-current academic versions of what contemporary literature was in terms of style, voice, and genre" (69). Sorrentino and O'Brien also exchanged correspondence about book recommendations, especially Irish literature. Foley deftly considers several of these books' content and publishing circumstances to parse out how authors were dealing with pressures from the publishing industry and how Dalkey Archive Press was (re)constructing literary history outside the institution.

Linking the origins of the song and musical practice "Hambone" to Nathaniel Mackey's *Hambone* journal in the third chapter, Foley writes, "Whereas hambone adapted as a creative and oppositional response to forcibly closed orders of signification in colonial and antebellum America, *Hambone* asks how the repercussions of such creative protest reverberate in the world of contemporary letters" (103). A look at *Hambone's* origins and a close reading of some contri-

butions reveals that *Hambone's* cross-cultural emphasis enabled its "discrepant engagement," which in turn "recuperates a history of creative labor that maintains its disruptive potential in its capacity to lead us elsewhere" (125). Using close reading passages from Mackey's works and correspondence with Mackey about *Hambone*, Foley connects Mackey's fictional and critical investments in musical dispossessions, hospitality, unruliness, and journeys to his editorial practices. In these practices, he rejects Western modernity in favor of embracing collective ways of knowing that are diverse in nature, resist institutional identifiers, and embrace the unknown.

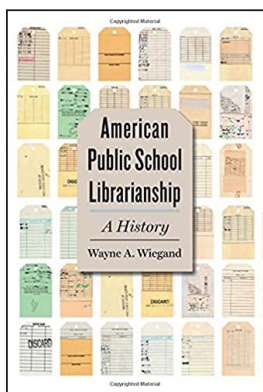
Chris Kraus's editorial work with the journal and publishing house Semiotext(e) and her book *I Love Dick* are the main subjects of the following chapter. Foley begins by tracing a redistribution of desire from the foundation of Semiotext(e), which "set out to subvert academic desire and helped to usher in poststructuralist theory into the position that semiotics once held" (128), to Kraus's novel, where the main character's love for an author becomes transplanted by her love for life. In a study of the connections between Kraus's novel, editorial work with the Native Agents series, and correspondence, Foley argues that Kraus develops a "public I" that is guided by relationships and intimacies.

The book concludes with a coda about Janice Lee and the online magazine *Entropy*. Foley considers *Entropy* as an example of editorial labor today, which is often uncompensated, institutionally unacknowledged, and configured by the sometimes at odds practices of openness of intimacy.

One of the greatest strengths of *The Editor Function* is the continued acknowledgment of those who were (and are) left out of the publishing and writing circles that comprise the bulk of Foley's text. In the first chapter, Foley notes that Olson's network was composed primarily of like-minded white men who helped advance his position and poetics. Kraus's Native Agents series that comprised women and nonbinary authors was created in response to the male-heavy and internationally oriented list of authors from Semiotext(e). In chapter 2, Foley highlights the omission of women in O'Brien's original prospectus for the *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, and he details his own efforts to continue O'Brien's abandoned work in *Interviews with Black Writers*, written early in O'Brien's career to counter the absence of both Black authors in literary history and criticism and discussions of power and visibility in literary studies. Working as an apprentice at Dalkey Archive Press, Foley sought to publish the works of Black authors included in O'Brien's book to middling success. He argues that scholars and practitioners must think critically about how editorial practices and publishing houses engage with constructions of race, acknowledging that the publishing industry is subject to and perpetuates structural biases.

The Editor Function: Literary Publishing in Postwar America covers a lot of ground in relatively few pages. Foley excels in weaving a complicated web of editors, authors, and publishing houses, each with their own agenda in creating postwar American literary culture. Libraries predominantly deal with the final product of these negotiations, but *The Editor Function* proves that the completed text is only part of the story. In doing so, Foley's text fills an obvious gap in literature about literary publishing following World War II into the present. While scholarship like the edited book *Literary Publishing in the Twenty-First Century* offers an overview of current trends in publishing, Charlotte Roh's work examines the prevailing whiteness of editorial boards. While many authors have considered the role of editors in preceding centuries, Foley provides necessary context for academic librarians regarding the specifics of the labor, challenges, and motivations related to postwar literary editing. —Emma Hetrick, University of Texas

Wayne A. Wiegand. *American Public School Librarianship: A History.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021. 360p. Hardcover, \$49.95 (ISBN: 978-1-4214-4150-1).



As I write this, New England and the Mid-Atlantic are digging out from a Nor'easter that dumped 20 to 30 inches of snow on coastal towns. Thinking about Wayne Wiegand's stature in the library history discipline as I experience these wintry conditions, the metaphor that comes to mind is of a rugged pathbreaker who is the first to trudge across a cold, unwelcoming field, making a way for followers who will gratefully fit their feet into his steps. Wiegand's *The Politics of an Emerging Profession* (Greenwood, 1986) and *Irrepressible Reformer* (1996) remain valuable starting points for researching the early history of the American Library Association and for understanding Melvil Dewey, one of the profession's controversial but foundational individuals. More recently, Wiegand's *Part of Our Lives* (Oxford, 2015) has called into question how libraries understand themselves, valuing their role in information-seeking/vetting at the expense of recreational reading materials, community social spaces, and other offerings that library users cherish. His insights on those fronts have influenced my own work and will likely shape a generation or more of scholars.

In *American Public School Librarianship*, Wiegand similarly provides a volume that will be a point of departure for the present and next generation. Here, he asks, "why did school librarianship turn out the way it did, and what can its history tell us about its limitations and opportunities in the twenty-first century's coming decades?" (2). As Wiegand argues in his Introduction, the constraints of educational and library structures that already existed when the public school library profession came into being are central to the answer. For example, school librarians faced adverse power dynamics due to the fiscal control that administrators have wielded and due to the roles textbook publishers and state standards have played in shaping educational environments. From both the education and public library worlds, school libraries also inherited a focus on "useful knowledge," narrowing their focus to serving curricular needs and teaching information literacy. For these reasons, Wiegand contends, school libraries did not encourage reading for pleasure, or school libraries as social spaces, as much as they might have done. Also, they did not respond as progressively as they could have to calls for racial desegregation and other issues.

In this book, we benefit from a treasure-trove of material about school libraries that Wiegand has accumulated through five decades of research on other topics. One strength is his documentation of the early influence of municipal libraries on school libraries, establishing branches within schools or providing children's materials to classrooms. Because of this genealogy, many school libraries ended up employing the Dewey Decimal Classification, using the *ALA Catalog* and Wilson bibliographies as selection tools, and adopting the public library profession's service ethic. In large part, school librarians also heeded the advice of a children's literature "clerisy," which promoted certain types of books for juvenile readers. This part of Wiegand's work is based upon public library annual reports that shed light on the collaborative efforts those institutions attempted with nearby school districts.

American Public School Librarianship is also valuable for uncovering fascinating stories and people that may not be widely known. Personally, I was interested in the "libraries" (book collections for schools) developed by nineteenth-century publishers, and I would like to track down more analyses of the titles, authors, and social values they contained. Wiegand also pro-