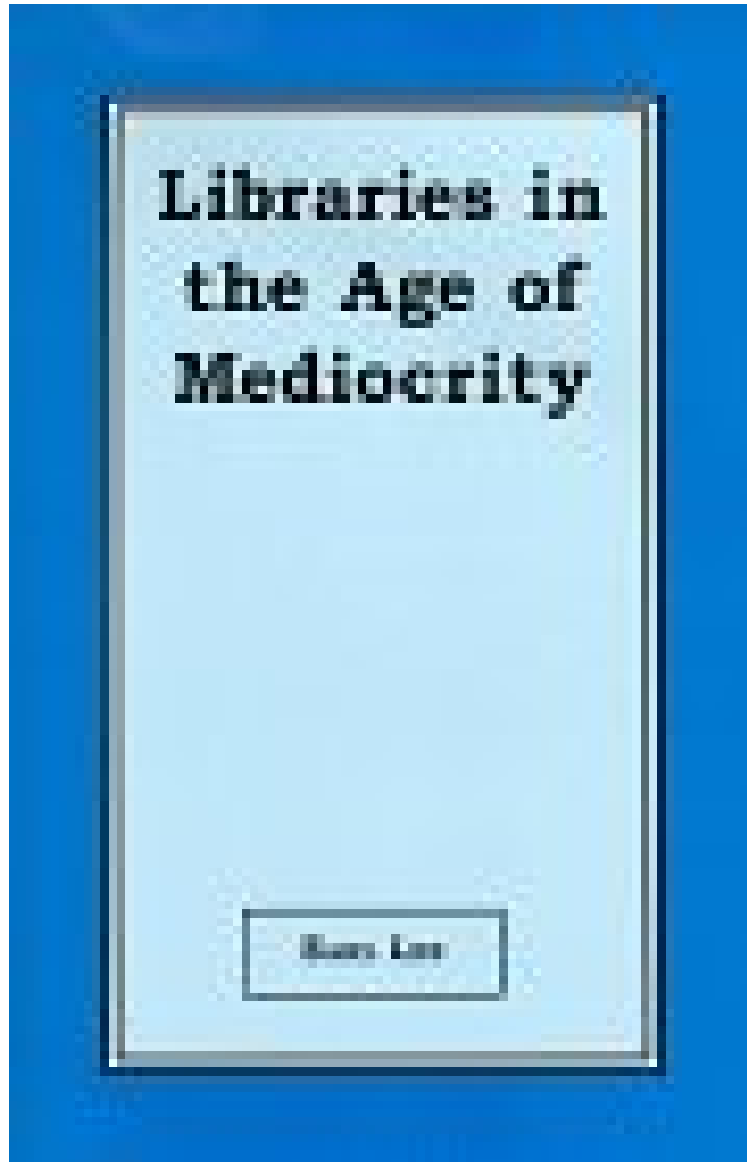


## Libraries in the Age of Mediocrity

*Earl Lee*

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**Earl Lee : Libraries in the Age of Mediocrity** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Libraries in the Age of Mediocrity:

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Outstanding, forcefully argued.By John RonaldThis book was a thoroughly enjoyable read, I literally could not put it down. Earl Lee argues forcefully and convincingly, the essays are mostly very intellectually satisfying. The only thing that prevents me from giving the book 5 stars is Lee's tendency to slide into humorous anecdote a little TOO much, causing some of the later essays to lose their focus and effectiveness.

I wish Mr. Lee would eventually go into Library Science education...I'd LOVE to take a class from him! (I'm going to start working on my MLS in the Fall of 2001, at the University of North Texas)...Would that we had more librarians in this country like him, too. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Controversial examination of censorship issues. By A Customer This book includes chapters on censorship, intellectual property, postmodernism, automation, outsourcing, and other topics important to scholars and librarians. Also included in the chapter "Freud in the Garden of Good Evil" is surprising new evidence that Sigmund Freud may have experimented with hallucinogenic mushrooms. This book is by the author of Drakulya, a novel retelling of Bram Stoker's Dracula.

I only wish I had your paper before me when I wrote Silicon Snake Oil--Clifford Stoll. Ultimately, says Earl Lee, libraries are involved in the quest for truth, but conceptualize it in a way very different from most. Library professionals pursue a philosophy of inclusion, trying to have as many versions of Truth as possible, in the hopes that somewhere in the mass of material, something meaningful may be found by some discerning reader. But in recent years the mass of data has grown to bury truth and defeat the discerning. Librarians have lost sight of what is important. The uncontrollable mass of data, the transformation of the library to an information center, the demise of the card catalog, the meretriciousness of publishers offerings, the dumbing down of textbooks, the decision by the Library of Congress to use the OCLC online system exclusively--these are all the subjects of thought-provoking and unsweetened opinions, welcome reminders of the rich tradition of intellectual freedom in the profession.

From Library Journal Annoying as he meanders from digression to digression, frustrating in his arrogant condescension toward nearly all that is popular, Lee, collection development librarian at Pittsburgh State University (KS) and associate editor of Librarians at Liberty, still writes well enough to maintain your curiosity and even to provoke your quick agreement or violent opposition. His collection of essays purports to offer models for a "postmodern" or "libertarian" examination and "deconstruction" of libraries as "modernist" institutions in a modernist society. The long piece (in the book's best chapter) on the views of A. Broadfield (A Philosophy of Librarianship, Grafton, 1949) left me wanting to read Broadfield more than more of Lee. But perseverance is rewarded. Despite the irrelevant brief digression on Freud and mushrooms, his critique of library automation practices and the market strategies that drive it is required reading; "Target ALA..." provides new insights on old truths (sometimes treated as new revelations by Lee). Chapters on intellectual property and other topics are studded with spirited sound bites, even if they often conclude with not more than a whimper of disagreement with the status quo. It is not inspiring, after all, to be told that in dealing with the torrent of evangelical Christian stuff, "the librarian can sleep peacefully...knowing that the progress of civilization will not be harmed by the lack of these materials in the collection." It's tempting to say the same of Lee's book, but it probably isn't really true. Despite its flaws, we probably need this eccentric critique, if only to understand the newer critics of the old and aging ways of librarianship. ?John Berry, "Library Journal" Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. "includes bibliographic entries and a thorough index.... It is recommended reading" -- MSRRRT Newsletter "we probably need this" -- John Berry About the Author Earl Lee is collection development librarian at Pittsburg (Kansas) State University, and associate editor of Librarians at Liberty.