Review of the book The Holocaust: Memories, Research, Reference

John A. Drobnicki
CUNY York College

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Simultaneously co-published as numbers 61-62 (1998) of The Reference Librarian, this book consists of 24 essays and five poems and, as the subtitle indicates, is divided into three sections. As with any collection of essays, some are better and more useful to librarians than others, and this reviewer will endeavor to give a balanced judgment of the book as a whole.

The first section, "Memories," which is also the shortest (27 pages), contains a powerful, moving portrait of both life and death in Auschwitz by survivor Amost Lustig and illustrates the despair and anguish of those who survived. Lustig incorrectly gives 4 million as the total killed at Auschwitz, however, even though most historians now generally agree that 1.5 million was the total dead there. The horrors of the Holocaust are also presented vividly in the poetry of Lyn Lifshin, whom many will be surprised to learn is neither a Holocaust survivor nor the child of survivors.

In the second section, "Research," several scholars and educators provide case studies of specific institutions, such as the Holocaust Resource Center at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, and the path-breaking Holocaust curriculum developed by a Massachusetts High School in 1972. Professor Henry Huttenbach of The City College of New York makes a persuasive argument that future studies of genocide must be comparative, and that recent events in Rwanda/Burundi could help provide more insight into those who participated in the Holocaust. (Readers might be interested to know that Huttenbach has since founded a new journal, the Journal of Genocide Research.) Professor Howard Israel's article on the biomedical ethical issues surrounding the use of the Nazi Eduard Pemkopf's classic anatomical atlas is fascinating and should prompt librarians to consider the origins of scientific data in other books in their collections.

By far, the most useful section for librarians is the last "Reference." Some of the topics covered are the use of the Internet to locate Holocaust information, biases of the Library of Congress in cataloging books dealing with other genocides, such as the Roma/Gypsy peoples; and the issues related to Holocaust denial materials in libraries and on the Internet. Professor Allan Mirwis of the Kingsborough Community College Library might surprise some librarians with his excellent chapter on "Overlooked Reference Tools for Researching the Holocaust," which discusses the value of sources, such as Gale's Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism and Contemporary Authors series, for Holocaust studies.

Most of the book's essays contain bibliographies and/or notes, and there is an overall index. There are quite a few inconsistencies in the format, however, which should have been corrected and standardized by the editors: some articles use parenthetical references, some use endnotes; some bibliographies are in APA format, others use the...
University of Chicago style; and some articles lack abstracts/ summaries. There are several typos, which also should have been caught by the editors — for example, Pastor Martin Niemöller is identified as Nummular (p. 158), and a contributor quotes Deborah Lipstadt with regard to Nazi honors instead of horrors (p. 64). As expected with any book that contains Internet addresses, several URLs cited by the authors have since changed.

Nevertheless, teachers, librarians, and college students should find this book very useful and thought provoking, and it is recommended for both academic and public libraries. Those libraries that already subscribe to The Reference Librarian should consider purchasing a copy for their circulating collections.

Reviewed by John A. Drobnicki, Assistant Professor, York College Library, City University of New York, New York, USA.