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Review of the book Harmful and Undesirable: Book Censorship in Nazi Germany

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Lewy, Guenter. **Harmful and undesirable: book censorship in Nazi Germany.** Oxford, 2016. 268p bibl index ISBN 9780190275280 cloth, \$34.95; ISBN 9780190275297 ebook, contact publisher for price

Political scientist Lewy (emer., Univ. of Massachusetts Amherst) is the author of numerous books on genocidal regimes, religion, and the Nazi era, including *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies* (CH, Jun'00, 37-5899). Here he provides a detailed account of book censorship in the Third

Reich within the wider context of Nazi Germany's cultural policies. The image of the Nazis for many is of a highly efficient totalitarian regime, but Lewy documents how the reality in this instance was one of bureaucratic inefficiency and overlapping jurisdictions. He describes competing personalities (Joseph Goebbels, Alfred Rosenberg, Philipp Bouhler, and various local officials) and rival propaganda agencies (RSK [National Chamber of Literature], PPK [Party Commission for the Protection of National Socialist Literature], and the Gestapo) all vying over who should decide which books did and did not get published, banned, or destroyed and which authors should be blacklisted, with several librarians willingly collaborating. Ideological purity was more important than the economic ramifications of closing publishing houses or refusing to sell certain books overseas. Lewy's book is more accessible, especially for undergraduates, than, for instance, *The Politics of Literature in Nazi Germany*, by Jan-Pieter Barbier (CH, Jan'14, 51-2537), which was first published in German in 2010. **Summing Up: ★★ Recommended.** Undergraduates through researchers/faculty.—*J. A. Drobnicki, York College, CUNY*