



Vandals in the Stacks?: A Response to Nicholson Baker's Assault on Libraries (Contributions in Librarianship and Information Science)

Richard J. Cox

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Libraries and archives have violated their public trust, argues Nicholson Baker in his controversial book *^IDouble Fold^R*, by destroying traditional books, newspapers, and other paper-based collections. Baker's powerful and persuasive book is wrong and misleading, and Cox critiques it point by point, questioning his research, his assumptions, and his arguments about why and how newspapers, books, and other collections are selected and maintained.

^IDouble Fold^R, which reads like a history of libraries and archives, is not a history at all, but a journalistic account that is often based on fanciful and far-flung assertions and weak data. The present book provides an opportunity to understand how libraries and archives view their societal mandate, the nature of their preservation and documentary functions, and the complex choices and decisions that librarians and archivists face. Libraries and archives are not simple warehouses for the storage of objects to be occasionally called upon by a scholar, but they play vital roles in determining and shaping a society's knowledge and documentation.

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