

belief in neutrality. Perhaps there is no happy medium for the reader who wants to fully support IF within the library while also protecting more vulnerable populations from injurious or inflammatory speech. These positions would appear to be diametrically opposed. The *IFM* instead offers practical advice for implementing intellectual freedom practices in libraries and answers legal questions regarding intellectual freedom while explaining why librarians and library workers should want to do this. It is a tough lesson in many ways.

While the material is consistently written in a clear, easy-to-follow fashion, readers may still feel unsatisfied and unsure of how to square their own personal feelings with the case the authors make for IF as an absolute principle. This tension is never openly addressed in the *IFM* outside of advice about how policy can be composed for issues like collection development or uses of meeting spaces to avoid conflict with community or in discussion of how content should not be removed from a library's collection because it might be found objectionable. However, a chapter new to this edition, "When to Call the Police," dealing with patron privacy and requests from law enforcement, at least hints at societal conflicts that may sometimes personally affect library workers and the library community. Calling the police is suggested only for times when illegality occurs. This advice will not sit well with librarians who feel that, in choosing neutrality, they are participating in the harm of some part of their communities. The volume's silence on these components of intellectual freedom may seem inadequate for library workers looking to resolve real struggles in their communities.

Critiques of former editions suggested that the *IFM* was not thorough or broad enough, that dissident positions go unacknowledged, and that the tone is smug and self-righteous. This most recent edition, however, really does appear to have considered such criticism. This is true even in consideration of the critiques being offered in this present review. The *IFM* is thorough and broad: supplementary issues are addressed (for example, censorship and lobbying are carried over from the previous edition). Dissident positions are addressed in discussions of collection development policies that reflect the entire community — although, as previously mentioned, dissident positions are not addressed in other ways. Finally, the tone of the *IFM* is straightforward and complete: it reflects both the gravitas and the complexity of the issues but appears to trust the reader to understand the complicated issues and to be capable of making the "right" decisions. In some ways, the *IFM* even feels nurturing: it gives the reader the materials that they need to understand intellectual freedom.

The thoroughness of the *Intellectual Freedom Manual* alone makes this a recommended read. Intellectual freedom is a complex, difficult topic, and the *IFM* handles it well. — Sarah McHone-Chase, Northern Illinois University

Jonathan Beller. *The World Computer: Derivative Conditions of Racial Capitalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021. 338p. Paperback, \$28.95 (ISBN: 9781478011163).

At the heart of this complex, ambitious, and difficult book is an intriguing idea: that the logic of capitalism has been to turn the entire world into a computer. In one stroke, all the tendencies toward the quantification of everything (of the human sciences, of social media, of our relationships to our bodies, of human achievements) becomes part of a single process: the precise and never-ending computation of value. Every incremental quantity, in every aspect of human life, is tabulated within the circuits of this computer. And there's more: because quantification and value — modeled on the idea of price — can only exist within a ratio of difference, of more to less, the "world computer" can describe not only the meaningless differences



between, say, one Olympic athlete and another, but the more insidious differences implicated in racism and other structures of oppression.

It is not easy to tease out all the ramifications and consequences of this idea from *The World Computer*. Beller writes in an extremely compressed style, combining terms and expressions from computer science, political economy, sociology, activism, and media studies together with a violence of juxtaposition that is breathtaking but often almost impenetrable. This is due largely to what Beller is trying to accomplish: an aggregation of much important work done in Marxism, Critical Race Theory, and political economy during the last decade or so, throwing together the disparate strands of this work while still remaining loyal to their differences and,

in some ways, their incommensurability. To seamlessly synthesize these different tendencies would be difficult enough; to attempt it while still elucidating the central idea of the world computer sometimes proves too much.

The book is divided into three long sections with two appendices. In the first section, on *Computational Racial Capitalism*, Beller outlines “the social difference engine.” He describes this as the social machine that tabulates differences and distributes resources (including social capital) accordingly, emphasizing the specific way this difference engine works along racial lines. Beller draws on Marx’s theories of the machine as well as the postwar history of computation and communication and its application to racialized classification to draw conclusions about the ways a “computational unconscious” now serves to reinforce the logics of racial capitalism independently of human decision-making: “Computers organize the whips and chains while humans watch and help” (96).

The second section, *The Computational Mode of Production*, develops Marx’s understanding of capitalism as a system oriented around the production and exchange of commodities for money. For Beller, the new digital economies (with their attendant data visualizations and metrics) are oriented around images and code in which “image-code, the network commodity, replaces what was formerly understood as the commodity on its way...from money to more money” (122) and where “the image became and remains a paradigmatic work-site of capitalism” (123). The imbrication of labor within screens, images, and codes give the computational mode of production “a carceral logic of enclosure, a settler-colonial logic that posits consciousness as a standing reserve” of untapped energy (122).

One of Beller’s arguments is that the computational mode of production allows for the financialization of all aspects of human life, making possible “derivative conditions.” Risk, success, and the distribution of life chances are controlled by the financialized machine that registers and acts upon the stored, socially constructed differences between identities. As a result, derivative conditions can be manipulated and turned to the profit of racial capitalism itself as “categories of social difference function...as wagers on the economic value of their underliers and as means of structuring risk for capital” (7).

This brief outline does not do justice to the scope of Beller’s argument and the wide survey of theoretical and empirical material. However, this scope is itself a weakness of the book. Quite simply, Beller is trying to do too much, and, by forcing the languages, concepts, and facts of all his different inspirations together, he makes the book almost impenetrable. There is a lot going on here, and some intriguing and complex questions raised and investigated, but the amount of work required to follow Beller is immense.

Whether this work is worthwhile or not is an open question. Another consequence of the vast scope of Beller's investigation and the constraint of putting it all into a single volume is that certain aspects of the analysis and argument appear ungrounded and vague. At times—and this is also a function of his very difficult style—it is unclear whether Beller refers to a concrete material reality, a theoretical construct, a metaphor, or perhaps all three at once. In many ways, these two weaknesses are a result of Beller's obvious passion and excitement for the project, as words and ideas fall over themselves in the urgency of their expression. But the work would have benefited from more space and more clarity of expression.

The kernel of Beller's project is that "the history of the commodification of life [is] a process of encrypting the world's myriad qualities and quantities" (6) and that "what we today call digitization began more than seven centuries ago with commodification" (17). This work will be of interest to anyone working in the area of digital services, education, information management, and technology from a critical perspective. There are plenty of compelling ideas in here, not the least of which is the offering of a program to "secure victory—in the form of a definitive step out of and away from racial capitalism—for the progressive movements of our times" through the "decolonization of information, and therefore of computation, and therefore of money" (7).

This book can be recommended for anyone interested in the critical theory of information, with the caveat that it will require a disproportionate amount of work to intellectually come to grips with Beller's extensive engagement with his material and to excavate what is significant or useful. More specific to librarians is Beller's contention that the business-as-usual of racial capitalism and the world computer are insufficient for survival and revolution. Librarianship's focus on technological solutions, and even the progressive politics of much of Digital Humanities, must directly confront the mechanisms of technological oppression Beller describes. "The politics, expressivities, pedagogies, practices of relation, and media of value creation and distribution adequate to the task of redesigning the entanglements of culture and economy remain to be collectively realized" (254), Beller writes, and this might stand as a mission statement for academic libraries committed to real social transformation. As challenging as this book is, library workers can draw valuable lessons about the relations between racial capitalism, technology, and information work, lessons concerning both the immensity of the challenges we face and the importance of addressing them. —*Sam Popowich, University of Alberta*

The Digital Black Atlantic. Roopika Risam and Kelly Baker Josephs, eds. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press, 2021. 272p. \$124.32 (ISBN 978-1517910808).

Along with increased attention and investment in the digital humanities during the past two decades, there also seems to be increased attention to Black print, digital, and material culture. Editors Roopika Risam and Kelly Baker Josephs—active in the scholarly digital humanities conversation for some time—set out to assemble a collection of essays based on Paul Gilroy's framework of *The Black Atlantic*, which theorizes that the intellectual legacy and life of Black peoples is not marginalized but transnational. *The Digital Black Atlantic* is a welcome addition to the University of Minnesota press *Debates in the Digital Humanities* annual series. This is the sixth volume in the series and serves as a departure from predominantly white discussions and practices in the digital humanities. In the 2016 collection, the notion of a Black digital humanities was advanced in Kim Gallon's chapter, "Making a Case for the Black Digital Humanities," and is frequently cited by the contributors of this volume.