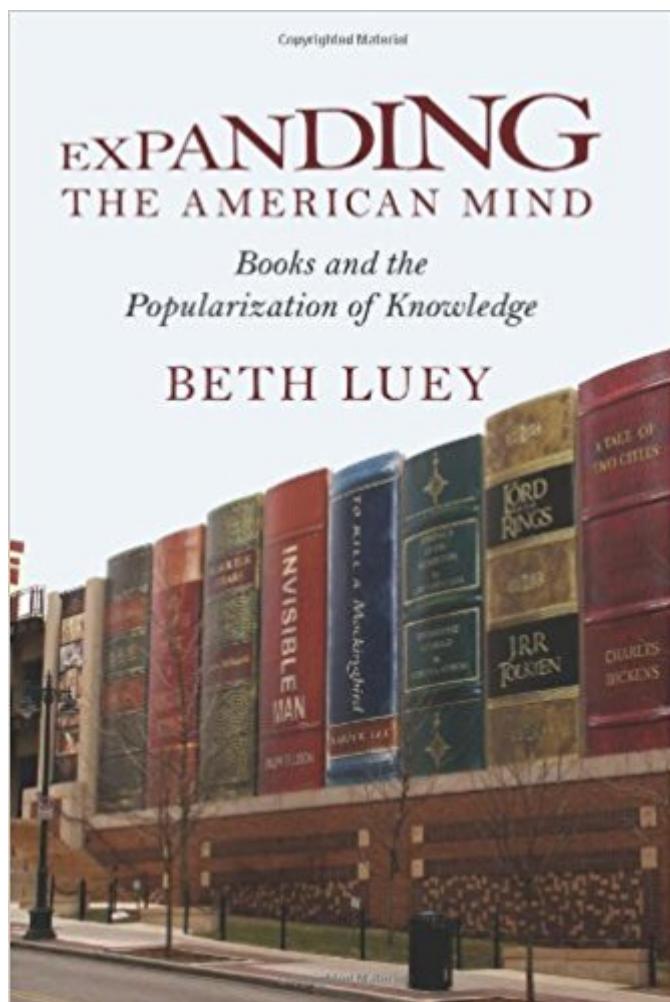


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Expanding The American Mind: Books And The Popularization Of Knowledge



Synopsis

Over the past fifty years, knowledge of the natural world, history, and human behavior has expanded dramatically. What has been learned in the academy has become part of political discourse, sermons, and everyday conversation. The dominant medium for transferring knowledge from universities to the public is popularization—books of serious nonfiction that make complex ideas and information accessible to nonexperts. Such writers as Carl Sagan, Stephen Jay Gould, Stephen Hawking, Daniel Boorstin, and Robert Coles have attracted hundreds of thousands of readers. As fields such as biology, physics, history, and psychology have changed the ways we view ourselves and our place in the universe, popularization has played an essential role in helping us to understand our world. Expanding the American Mind begins by comparing fiction and nonfiction—at their relative respectability in the eyes of reading experts and in the opinions of readers themselves. It then traces the roots of popularization from the Middle Ages to the present, examining changes in literacy, education, and university politics. Focusing on the period since World War II, it examines the ways that curricular reform has increased interest in popularization as well as the impact of specialization and professionalization among the faculty. It looks at the motivations of academic authors and the risks and rewards that come from writing for a popular audience. It also explains how experts write for nonexperts—at the rhetorical devices they use and the voices in which they communicate. Beth Luey also looks at the readers of popularizations—at their motivations for reading, the ways they evaluate nonfiction, and how they choose what to read. This is the first book to use surveys and online reader responses to study nonfiction reading. It also compares the experience of reading serious nonfiction with that of reading other genres. Using publishers' archives and editor-author correspondence, Luey goes on to examine what editors, designers, and marketers in this very competitive business do to create and sell popularizations to the largest audience possible. In a brief afterword she discusses popularization and the Web. The result is a highly readable and engaging survey of this distinctive genre of writing.

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Customer Reviews

"Luey, who directed the Scholarly Publishing Program at Arizona State University for more than 25 years, is known for her *Handbook for Academic Authors*, now in its fifth edition. Her new book is a hybrid of sorts. It begins on a tour of the history of nonfiction and popularization and moves to what could almost be a primer for academics wishing to write with clarity, grip, and non-condescension. Further elements include fun snippets that document the crucial role of editors as they alternately pet and cajole authors in search of lucidity." — Chronicle of Higher Education "Luey writes lucidly and perceptively, and her book is replete with insights and historical knowledge. . . . Highly recommended." — Choice "Expanding the American Mind is a fine and fascinating study of popularization. . . . Luey is a formidably knowledgeable scholar and, one sees also in these pages, a wise one. . . . General readers will reflect along with Luey on the remarkable—and remarkably recent—changes in the dissemination of books to many Americans." — Publishing Research Quarterly "Luey has written a spirited and generous defense of modern reading habits and, in particular, a well-thought-out and sensible discussion of the meaning and implications of popularization." — The Historian "A seminal work of impeccable scholarship and a very highly recommended addition to both academic and community library collections." — The Midwest Book Review

Beth Luey is author of *Handbook for Academic Authors* and editor of *Revising Your Dissertation: Advice from Leading Editors*. For more than twenty-five years, she directed the Scholarly Publishing Program at Arizona State University.

This is a really interesting and amusing (yes, amusing!) book on a topic that not many people could've made as riveting as Beth Luey does. I read this book when it first came out and really enjoyed it while learning so much. I came to this page for the link so that I could personally

recommend it to a friend and am shocked by how few reviews it has, which I am now trying to rectify.

The concept of 'life long learning' was well reinforced in the 20th Century by the rapid expansions and advancements across the board with respect to all of the physical and social sciences. These advances in information expanded from the university into the general public through the publishing of non-fiction titles written by experts in their respective fields of expertise specifically for the non-specialist general reader. This popularization of academically generated data has led to an enduringly significant impact upon popular culture. In "Expanding the American Mind: Books and the Popularization of Knowledge", author and the former director of the Scholarly Publishing Program at Arizona State University Beth Luey examines the history of this phenomena, including a survey of the readers of popularized science books with respect to their motivations in their selection and evaluation process. A thoroughly 'reader friendly' book in its own right, "Expanding the American Mind: Books and the Popularization of Knowledge" is a seminal work of impeccable scholarship and a very highly recommended addition to both academic and community library collections.

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