

Summer 2004

Orinoco Flow: Culture, Narrative, and the Political Economy of Information

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Recommended Citation

Canterbury, Les, "Orinoco Flow: Culture, Narrative, and the Political Economy of Information" (2004). *Our House Articles, Posters, and Presentations*. 329.
https://inspire.redlands.edu/oh_articles/329



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BOOK REVIEWS

Belton, Benjamin Keith. (2003). *Orinoco Flow: Culture, Narrative, and the Political Economy of Information*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow. ISBN 0-8108-4831-7. \$35.00

Scarecrow Press has labeled *Orinoco Flow* a travel book (along with Library and Information Science). Boy! This is not your Aunt Maggie's travelogue! *Orinoco Flow* is the book version of Benjamin Keith Belton's 1998 Ph.D. dissertation. He uses narrative analysis to explore many aspects of the body of knowledge on South America's Orinoco River. But the book is not really about the Orinoco. It is a critical examination of a mass of information about a place. Belton uses the Rio Orinoco region as that place. Belton combines his knowledge of, and interest in, this to-the-average-American exotic place with his desire to answer the question, "What are the narrative relationships among the development of capitalism, culture, and regional space?"

The author has chosen an ambitious scope for his book. It does much more than examine the Rio Orinoco information archive. Belton uses the Orinoco as a metaphor or case study for information theory applied to any archive or body of knowledge on the New World, or perhaps any European-centered process of discovery, and the mechanisms of its creation, maintenance, and use. The ideas of a bevy of theorists appear as Belton examines many aspects of, and sources of, information on the Orinoco River. The literary, historical, and scientific sources he cites cover a vast temporal and topical span. Writers Alexander von Humboldt, Daniel Defoe, and Alejo Carpentier only begin to illustrate the range that is discussed: from European pre-Columbian descriptions of the New World through current discussions of the global economy. The extensive bibliography would be useful to students seeking a range of information on the Orinoco area.

Because the Orinoco sounds like a romantic locale, and because Belton uses the same catchy title as that used by a popular singer for one of her works a few years ago, the book may attract some attention. Not a bad strategy. It might pull in readers who otherwise would steer clear of a dissertation in information theory. So, let's say that an education librarian who is an Enya fan and who thinks that a raft trip on the Rio Orinoco would be a nice thing to do next summer sees the title and acquires Belton's book. What is she going to get from it? Perhaps not much that applies to her day-to-day work. But if she is into critical theory she will find here an interesting application. If she is not a regular reader in this esoteric field, *Orinoco Flow* could serve as a fine introduction. Even if the answer to Belton's question, "What are the narrative relationships among the development of capitalism, culture, and regional space?" would not cause you to lose sleep, you might find this unique book an interesting read.

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Donnelly, Gerard and Blaney, Joseph R., Eds. (2003). *Technological Issues in Broadcast Education: Critical Challenges*. Westport, CT: Praeger. ISBN 0-275-97521-5. \$64.95

Journalism, broadcasting, and mass communication programs in higher education face critical challenges concerning how best to prepare students for media careers of the future. In this collection of essays, some of the top broadcast educators in the country offer diverse thoughts on how technology is impacting broadcast education at the beginning of the 21st century. The contributors describe how their institutions