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Book Review: The Hidden Giants

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The Hidden Giants. Sethanne Howard. 2006. Lulu.
166 pp. \$28.00 (Paperback). \$20.12 (download).¹

Reviewed by Maluka D. Muñoz²

The Hidden Giants covers a 4000-year history of women who have made admirable contributions in science and technology, but until this or similar books had never been properly recognized or even merely identified. This book is well balanced in crediting women and, when appropriate, the men with or for whom they worked, who also contributed to the women mentioned throughout the book in their accomplishments. The book was divided into six chapters where scholarly women of achievement were mentioned in chronological order starting from 400 Common Era (CE) up to the 20th Century.

In chapter one, *The Beginnings*, Howard provides an enlightening history of (as she refers to it), “one of the world’s rare treasures: the Great Library”, also known as the Alexandrian Library, which existed in Alexandria, Egypt in 400 CE (11). It was an excellent introduction because she describes how important this library was to both the men and women scholars of that era. In this chapter she mentions that “women hold up half the sky” and that “the results of science have no gender” (15). She continues on in this chapter with examples of many women in this early era to support these statements. She also describes the challenges women faced in pursuing an education in the eastern and western world.

The chapters that follow, as mentioned earlier, are chronological, historical accounts of women in the times that followed. The titles of the chapters are: *Through the Middle Ages, Through the Renaissance and into the Enlightenment, Through the 1700’s and into the Early 1800’s, The 19th and Early 20th Centuries*, and ending with *The 20th Century* (chapters 2-6, respectively). Organizing the chapters chronologically is well done, but the organization within the chapters seems a bit random.

The following are some suggestions to consider incorporating within the individual chapters. In reading through the listings of accomplished women within each chapter it would have been helpful to have the chapter broken up by sub-titles in the form of the women’s disciplines. This would be helpful in facilitating going back and looking up the information after reading through the book. Without some sort of order of this type, the reader may have to re-read a chapter or maybe even the entire book to find women in particular occupations. Sorting the chapters in this manner would also be helpful to an individual doing research on women in particular occupations and who may not, therefore, want to read the entire book. An alternative would be to include a second index that would list the various areas of discipline in which these women excelled, in order to look them up in this manner.

There are a few other suggestions I have for the author to consider in the presentation of the book. One element that brought some confusion is that, in almost

¹ This book is available as a download at <http://www.lulu.com>.

² M. D. Muñoz earned a BS degree in electrical engineering in 1989 and worked in the corporate world for nearly 12 years as a project manager. Muñoz made the decision to make a career change and recently earned her MA in higher education administration. She has been selected as a PhD candidate with New Mexico State University for their fall of 2007 cohort.

every reference to a figure or picture, the item was not in the location (within the text) it was said to be. It seemed, therefore, as if I were reading a draft, rather than a publication. In addition, there were a couple of areas where the author makes comments that do not seem to go along with the book's theme. As an example, at the bottom of page 92 and the top of page 93, she makes assertions about child labor, but I do not see the connection between *The Hidden Giants* and these few (out-of-context) comments by Howard.

In conclusion, I highly commend Howard for making me aware of the many grand women who have contributed to paving the path for many of us in the fields of science and technology. I hope that this book will serve as an inspiration for other (women) readers in their current endeavors. I think women in technical, and even in non-technical fields, will feel very proud to be a woman as they read about the achievements our gender have made throughout history, particularly those periods covered by this book. I know I certainly felt proud. Howard's book will also hopefully serve as inspiration for future generations of women. She provides many examples of women in various occupations throughout each of the eras covered in this book. It is obvious that her research has been quite intense and inclusive concerning the history of women.