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IN THE COUNTRY OF BOOKS

Commonplace Books
and Other Readings

Richard Katzev

In the Country of Books is the first contemporary review of the commonplace book tradition, as well as a unique, in-depth analysis of a single commonplace book. It presents the results of the first-ever survey of individuals who currently keep such a record and provides an overview of the recent appearance of commonplace books on the Web.

In most commentaries on literature the experience of the reader is virtually ignored as scholars and critics attempt to discern the meaning of the text from various theoretical or cultural frameworks. Instead, this volume focuses on the experience of readers, illustrated with accounts of the author's reading experiences and current research findings.

In antiquity commonplace books functioned as organized sources of knowledge and wisdom collected for use in philosophical discussions, public speeches, and legal disputes. Over the course of the following centuries, the form developed into personal collections of notable literary extracts organized in highly idiosyncratic ways. The first section of this volume presents a historical background of commonplace books—an individual's record or journal of memorable reading passages.

The essays in the second section discuss a number of literary topics including several contemporary literary works, the function of bookmarks in the reading experience, *The New Yorker* magazine, and the current status of libraries. The volume concludes with an analysis of the varied effects of reading literature, including a study of the author's commonplace book, and a discussion of the future of the commonplace book tradition.

About the Author: Richard Katzev is President of Public Policy Research, www.publicpolicyresearch.net, a social and environmental research firm in Portland, Oregon. He served as Professor of Psychology at Reed College for over 25 years and is the author of *Promoting Energy Conservation*, *Anecdote and Evidence*, and *A Sense of Place*.

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