Producing over a hundred book reviews a year is more complicated than one might imagine. It may be of interest to readers of the *NWIG* (especially to reviewers and the authors of books that are—or should have been—reviewed) to know how it all plays out, with Rich handling the early stages and Sally taking over once the reviewers send in their texts.

Scouting for relevant titles used to be facilitated by monthly acquisition lists from the KITLV library. But since it was integrated into the University of Leiden Library, we depend instead on the university library and Amazon.com’s lists of Caribbean books, plus the titles that we notice in the course of our reading of journals, newspapers, and so forth. We then decide which ones merit review and which deserve only to be listed (either because their Caribbean content is restricted to a chapter or two or because they don’t seem sufficiently compelling, given the competition for space). This year’s non-reviewed books include fifty-some such titles, listed at the end of this article.

Next comes figuring out an appropriate specialist (sometimes with the assistance of a colleague on our editorial board) who isn’t already in the process of reviewing a book for us, and soliciting a review. About half of those solicited agree. Some of the others, after prodding, suggest an alternative reviewer, and some never reply at all, even after a reminder or two. The search continues, often with two, three, or four people solicited until, in certain cases (this year, nearly twenty—see below) we simply give up. Finding a willing reviewer averages three or four email exchanges.

We then send the reviewer style guidelines (including word limit and deadline) and ask the publisher to send the book directly to him/her. Usually this works smoothly, though in some cases (between twenty and thirty this year, see below) the publisher, after three or even four requests, never sends the book.

Then the fun begins. Perhaps half of reviewers submit their files within a month or two of the deadline. The others receive a series of gentle email reminders, sometimes over a two-year period. Reviewers often cite personal reasons, from health, childbirth, or divorce to tenure reviews and teaching...
loads, for being late. When these exchanges drag on for a couple of years after the original due date, we send a final reminder/warning; then we give up and post the title in our Hall of Shame, partly to let the book’s author know that we’ve done our best to publish a review. The procedure works well for getting books reviewed; we’ve had only one complaint about the H-of-S as an institution (from a person who nevertheless promised to quickly finish his review—though he never did). The latest note from a reviewer who received the final warning letter emailed: “OK ... I’ll have the review to you by New Years’, so I can avoid making an appearance on the NWIG Naughty List. In an age of rapidly and ridiculously escalating workloads it is a challenge to keep on top of everything. I’m on leave and yet I am still in the office! But I’m not trying to make excuses, and I will write the review before the deadline.” We’re happy to report that she did.

For NWIG’s two 2014 issues, taking care of the tasks so far mentioned has produced over 2500 emails, sent and received.

Once a review arrives chez nous, SP begins the work of editing, communicating with each reviewer so that decisions about everything regarding both form and content—including questions of style, the accuracy and relevance of facts and references, decisions about what is and is not necessary to explain to Caribbeanist readers, and much more—is mutually acceptable. Submitted reviews vary tremendously in terms of the time they take; many require a minimal touch-up, others represent a full morning’s work, and a few have involved several dozen emailed revisions over a period of weeks. Reviewers who are not native English speakers can present special challenges, in some cases turning the editing into a process more like translation.

The very great majority of our book reviewers do a terrific job, and we are immensely grateful to them. But, as noted above, there are always a few who neither produce the reviews that they promised nor release the book to another reviewer. Therefore, it is once again our solemn duty to induct this select group of scholars into the Caribbeanist Hall of Shame. As is our custom, and in an attempt to exercise discretion and protect the reputation of innocent Caribbeanists, we follow the eighteenth-century convention in identifying slack reviewers by first and last initials.

Sex and the Citizen: Interrogating the Caribbean, edited by Faith L. Smith (Charlotte: University of Virginia Press, 2011, paper US$35.00) (J—i S—A—n)
British Diplomacy and US Hegemony in Cuba, 1898–1964, by Christopher Hull (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, cloth US$92.00) (R—d G—t)
Sexualidades disidentes en la narrativa cubana contemporánea, by Patricia Valladares-Ruiz (Woodbridge, U.K.: Tamesis, 2012, cloth US$95.00) (K—y d—l B—o R—z)