In 1994, to mark the journal’s 75th anniversary, Gert Oostindie wrote a useful history of the evolution of the *New West Indian Guide* beginning with its first half-century as the Dutch-language, Dutch-oriented *West-Indische Gids*, founded in 1919 and renamed the *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* in 1959 (“From Wig to *NWIG*, 1919–1993,” published with vol. 68). He noted that in the first 40 volumes, fully 250 of the 280 articles dealt with Dutch territories and concerns, and that the book reviews reflected the same national focus, a trend that continued during the 1960s and 1970s. But once a decision was taken in the early 1980s to “transform the *Gids* into a major English-language journal,” it began providing “the world’s most complete review of books covering all parts of the [Caribbean] region and all disciplines of Caribbean studies.”

In 1982, when the *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* was rebaptized the *New West Indian Guide* and became an exclusively English-language publication, the two of us joined the editorial board, with Sally becoming book review editor. She held that position for the next five years, producing an average of 36 reviews and 3 review articles annually. (At that time the review process was distinctly pre-computer-era—reviews were submitted on typescript pages, editing was done in handwriting, and all correspondence with reviewers arrived and left through the post office; once a review was published, she scissor-clipped it from a spare copy of the journal and put it in the mail to the book’s publisher.) After we moved to the Caribbean, recent Johns Hopkins Ph.D. Michel-Rolph Trouillot replaced her for five years, producing some 21 reviews per year, but almost no review articles. Then, when the two of us took over in 1992, we began publishing 50–60 reviews and 5 review articles per year. In 2012, we were afforded greater space in the journal, which allowed us thenceforth to effectively double the number of reviews to an annual offering of 100 reviews, two-to-six review essays, and an essay commenting on more than a hundred additional books. The first six of these essays adopted Caribbean culinary themes, discussing recipes before turning to books—“Callaloo,” “Rundown,” “Migan,” “Sancocho,” and “Turning Coo-coo”—ending with “Cook’s Day Off,” before settling into...
yearly “Bookshelf” essays (though we realized in 2002 that we’d neglected an essential component of French Caribbean meals and began that year’s essay with an homage to the “Ti Ponch”).

As we wrote in “Bookshelf 2014,” the process of producing over a hundred reviews a year is complicated, especially from our noninstitutional home base in the rural Caribbean. The current 100th anniversary moment (1919–2019) might be a good time to spell out further details of the way 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 is the first task. In contrast to their standard practice with other academic journals, publishers do not simply send review copies of new books to the NWIG unsolicited. Rather, we must identify the books we want to have reviewed, find a willing reviewer, and then ask the publisher to send the book directly to that person. The process for discovering new books involves consultation of such resources as amazon.com, publishers’ online catalogs, and websites (including the excellent “Repeating Islands”), and keeping our eyes open as we read journals, newspapers, and emails; this part of the process takes the equivalent of about 30 full days a year. We then decide which ones merit a review, which ones to read and comment on briefly in “Bookshelf,” and which ones to list by title only in “Bookshelf” because of their marginal interest to NWIG readers (see the end of this article for this year’s unreviewed titles).

Next comes figuring out an appropriate specialist (someone who works in a related field, isn’t already reviewing another book for us, hasn’t blurbed the book, and, if it’s an edited volume, isn’t a contributor). For the past year, Rich’s Gmail account lists 2,301 emails involved with finding reviewers and following through with them until final submission. (We’d like to thank two colleagues on the editorial board who have been particularly helpful with suggestions at this stage—Peter Hulme for [mainly Anglophone] literature books and Jorge Giovannetti-Torres for books on the Hispanophone Caribbean; in addition, Ken Bilby has kindly assisted with ideas on the smaller number of books about Caribbean music.) About half of the scholars who are solicited say yes, and when they can’t take on the review they often make suggestions for someone else to contact. Some never reply at all, even after a reminder or two. Senior scholars who decline the invitation sometimes let us know about a younger colleague, occasionally a Ph.D. candidate or recent postdoc, who may be interested. Finding a reviewer usually takes three or four (sometimes six or seven) email exchanges, and in some cases, we’re forced to give up and merely list the book in “Bookshelf.” (One of our tricks is to scout out books and secure a reviewer before a book is published, in effect “getting there” before another journal; this demands being precise about the book’s publication date, which