Alien Volcanoes, by Rosaly M. C. Lopes and Michael W. Carroll (150 pages, May 2008), offers a well-illustrated roundup of volcanic activity on the moons and planets of our solar system. From Earth’s own eruption of Krakatau in 1883 (the most destructive volcanic event in recorded history), to the ancient domes, rifts, rilles, fissures, craters, calderas, and coronas of Venus, Mars, and the Moon, and to the flows and plumes of the Jovian satellite Io, this volume lays out the evidence for both active and extinct volcanoes on our planetary neighbors. $29.95. Johns Hopkins University. 978-0-8108-8673-7.

Deering Library: An Illustrated History, edited by Nina Barrett (148 pages, April 2008), celebrates the 75th anniversary of the Charles Deering Library, which served as Northwestern University’s main library from 1933 to 1970. Assistant University Librarian for Special Libraries Jeffrey Garrett has written an introduction that describes the library’s major collections. Other authors cover its architect, James Gamble Rogers; the library’s magnificent Gothic features, statues, carvings, inscriptions, landscaping, and stained glass; and an overview of Deering’s history through 2008. As one student said, “Deering was magnificent. You could not enter without knowing you were in a university. It soared, it inspired, it created dreams, and made one want to succeed. It was also a great place to find a date.” $40.00. Northwestern University. 978-0-8101-2502-5.

The Meinertzhagen Mystery: The Life and Legend of a Colossal Fraud, by Brian Garfield (352 pages, February 2008), unravels the layers of legend and lies surrounding British soldier, spy, and naturalist Col. Richard Meinertzhagen (1878–1967). His real-life exploits in East Africa, the Middle East, and Europe made him a model for his friend Ian Fleming’s sophisticated spy James Bond, and perhaps for John Buchan’s hero Sandy Arbuthnot. But Meinertzhagen frequently invented fantastic and unverifiable stories, revised his diaries continually, and claimed responsibility for the legendary “haversack ruse” in Palestine in 1917, even though it was someone else’s idea and failed to fool the Turkish army anyway. He stole bird specimens from other taxidermists’ collections, then relabeled them as his own discoveries. His claims that he met with Hitler three times in Berlin in the 1930s to plead for Jewish emigration to Palestine, once with a loaded gun in his pocket, are dubious. His first wife died in 1928 from a gunshot wound to the head that some view suspiciously, although it was ruled an accident. Garfield dissects all the evidence with skill and fascination, concluding that Meinertzhagen’s achievements “were genuine, but somehow he was obsessed with gilding each lily in ornate filigree so byzantine and heavy that it suffocated the flower within.” $17.95. Potomac. 978-1-59797-160-7.

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