

The masters of functional orthodontics (2003)

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This is a splendid book in which the authors outline the historical development of functional orthodontics by relating to the lifelong works of the acknowledged principals in this field referred to as the 'Masters' of the title.

It is very significant work which has brought together a tremendous amount of information on the lives and clinical interaction of the people who pioneered functional orthodontics.

The book runs to over 400 pages and has five main chapters. It is well prefaced by the authors, and there is a short presentation by the President of the Italian History of Medicine Society, as well as two succinct forwards by Hans Peter Bimler and Thomas N. Graber.

The first three chapters set the scene with much historical background. Chapter 1 provides a comprehensive overview in the form of a timeline of orthodontic discovery from the Greek and Roman civilizations up to the present time. Chapter 2 introduces the first concepts of functional therapy into the latter part of this history with much fascinating detail touching on the alternative concepts and techniques that began to hold sway in the first half of the last century. This is developed further in Chapter 3 with an in-depth presentation of the origins and refinements made to functional orthopaedics by the leading workers in the field, primarily European to begin with, up to contemporary times by when the method was being assimilated by North American orthodontists. These three chapters alone are supported by 440 references, which gives an indication of the breadth of the subject matter.

The magnum opus is undoubtedly Chapter 4, which extends for nearly half the book and covers the contributions made by the eight acknowledged 'Masters'.

These are Vigo Andresen, Han Peter Bimler, Wilhelm Balters, George Klammt, Rolf Fränkel, Hugo Stockfisch, Edmundo Muzj and Oscar Hoffer. Each biography in this chapter starts with a quotation of the individual's philosophy along with a short scenario outlining the major historical events of the time, together with a similar chronicle on daily life, which is quite charming and adds a personal touch. There then follows the historical account in general terms of the evolution of the proponent's philosophy, with many interesting quotes and anecdotes, together with a section on practical applications showing case reports. At the end is a listing of the individual's work and also a section on further recommended reading.

The final chapter is short and essentially a summary, where the authors pose a number of questions and outline their views on the use of functional therapy in the future.

Overall, this book has been produced to a very high standard and the text is well laid out and helpfully highlighted, making it easy to read and refer to. It is liberally supplied with pictures and diagrams, which are sepia in nature and probably reflect the archives and sources from where the historical material has been drawn. Although the book is certainly expensive, as to be expected for a work of this type, it would be a valuable addition to any departmental library for the historical insight it provides. Indeed this book would grace the shelves of any clinician's office who practiced functional orthodontics extensively.

The authors are to be congratulated for bringing together such a fascinating work.

David Slattery

