

BOOK REVIEWS

The Literature of Library and Information Science, Parts I and II. Edited by GEORGE S. BOBINSKI. *Drexel Library Quarterly* 15 (1 and 3), January and July 1979. Received in libraries February and November 1980 respectively. Part I, 100 pp.; Part II, 119 pp. \$6.00 each or \$11.00 for both, postage included. ISSN-0012-6160.

Before any serious study of the current status and trends in the literature of library and information science can be productive, it would seem to be necessary that a combined library, media and information science definition and philosophy be unconditionally accepted by all of the contributors. At no point in the work under review is there a statement of philosophy. And, although the definition exists (Part I, p. 1), it is not followed.

These are nine articles and an appendix in the two parts. In Part I are two articles about professional journals, one about nonprint materials, and one about monographs. In Part II there is an article each about indexes and abstracts, librarians as writers, notable books in library science, collections in library and information science, and an appendix about publishing outside the United States. In a few of the articles the subject matter is not strictly that suggested by the chapter title.

The issues' stated purpose: "to present the current status and trends of the literature of librarianship and information science" is not realized. Not only does the total work fail to answer the questions, what is the current status? and what are the trends? but some of the individual articles deliberately veer from either topic. For example, one author presents a list of "Notable Books in Library Science . . ." (Part II, pp. 50-77). His list is traditional and historical in scope and does not include the new areas of knowledge from information science and media subjects that are included in the working definition of librarianship (Part I, p. 1). His criterion for authors is that they be "librarians or directly associated with libraries" (Part II, p. 51). Innovative contributions from the past by people well versed in both library and information science might have included mention of Mortimer Taube (coordinate indexing), Maurice Tauber (feasibility study for ERIC), Joseph Becker (networking), and Eugene Garfield (citation indexing) and by people coming from other disciplines to contribute to the new concepts of information services such as Hans Peter Luhn, Calvin Mooers, Allen Kent, Carlos Cuadra and Harold Borko. Current trends should certainly hint at these and the ideas of some of the new information specialists such as Martha Williams (making information systems transparent to the user), Alan Pritchard (bibliometrics) and F. Wilfrid Lancaster (paper-less society). A similar group could be drawn from the media field. Instead, the author supplements his list by polling sixty retired "distinguished librarians," twenty-four of whom responded, yielding seventy-four titles, hardly current status nor trends. The methodology is suspect, the list a hodge-podge.

Negative aspects of the profession seem to be overdrawn. For example, statements about librarians as poor readers of the literature, prolific but poor writers, engaged in dull labors, and publishers and editors engaged in devious practices prevail. One author states that "both the *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* and the *Journal of Library Automation* are well beyond the comprehension level of thousands of librarians . . ." (Part I, p. 32), another that "there is no commonly accepted definition of the scope, purpose, goals and direction of the profession of librarianship" (Part II, p. 15). One would think that this group of librarians might have developed a working statement of the purpose, goals, scope and direction, if only in order to establish a framework for presenting the current status and trends in the literature.

Omissions are obvious. Why, in the discussion of monographs, is there no mention of their bibliographic control through use of national indexes? Why are so few publishers of library and information science monographs identified when the *Publishers Trade List Annual* contains a nearly-complete listing of about eighty sources of monographs. Annuals with emphasis on bibliographic essays such as the *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology* (ARIST) get short treatment. There is no mention of indexes of dissertations and master's theses nor indexes of government publications that significantly contribute to controlling the literature of library and information science. The chapter on indexes and abstracts considers the *Social Sciences Citation Index* but leaves out the weekly *Current Contents: Social Sciences and Humanities* which feeds it.

The authors of the nine articles seem sincere, even eager to communicate. The principal problem is that there is no unity of purpose identifiable in the total work, no apparent standard of focus, no problem solved for the reader. There are many insightful comments sprinkled among the paragraphs. And, two of the chapters, the one on indexes and abstracts and the one on collections are positive and interesting, if not visionary. The one on English-Language publishing outside the United States and the Appendix embellish factual information that is readily available elsewhere.

Since literature is a principal component of library school curricula and of continuing education programs for practicing librarians what seems to be needed is a strong stand, positive leadership and direction for assessing the needs of the profession. These two issues of the *Drexel Library Quarterly* have pointed up again the literature problem. Attention should be given to it both by practitioners and by the faculty and students in library schools.

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Online Searching: An Introduction, W. M. HENRY *et al.* Butterworths, London, 1980, 209 pp., £12.00. LC 90-40242. ISBN 0-408-10696-4.

The authors indicate that this volume is an outgrowth of a seminar they presented in which participants were introduced to online searching for bibliographic references. The resulting book is intended as a guide for both managers and aspiring practitioners. Material is presented in four segments; Chapters 1-3 establish a general overview of online searching (scope of vendor services, range of databases available, hardware requirements). Chapters 4-7 provide a more detailed introduction to search strategy development, controlled vocabularies, file structures for online systems, record formats, Boolean connectives (and the more sophisticated proximity devices), truncation, and other command language features. The last three chapters focus on the responsibilities of the intermediary, the management tasks involved in search service operations, and training/education needs for search service intermediaries. In addition, there are seven appendices, each devoted to a separate vendor, which are comprised of aids and/or information supplied by the vendors.

This book would be especially useful for those who are familiar with some of the online systems described and are interested in comparing already familiar features of systems regularly searched with those of competing or alternative vendors. The authors also bring together interesting material on the origins of online systems, present useful details of the role played by computer hardware in the search system configuration, and offer a cogent description of the inverted file structure. The experienced searcher will find the problems familiar and may find the graphics useful as alternative devices for picturing the interrelationships of search concepts.

There are a number of problems an instructor would have to face if this book were adopted for introductory courses in online searching. My experience has been that new students often are willing to attribute magical powers to the simple matching process involved in computer searches of inverted files. Knowing what the machine does at the outset, before any connect time is demonstrated, helps students visualize the string matching involved as terms are selected, combined and truncated. There is also a problem in familiarizing students with the etiquette of a particular vendor's system. My experience has been that anxiety is reduced when a system is introduced, demonstrated, practice sessions arranged, and problems discussed prior to the introduction of alternative systems. Eventually, as new systems are introduced students become comfortable with making comparisons among command languages, field processing differences and the like. Much of that process is obviated in this book because the comparisons are presented by the authors; new students may find the multiple approaches to many systems confusing. Finally, the book would be more useful to new students if practice sets and their solutions were included. As has been noted, the book includes much reprinted vendor material with the result that only the first 120 pages is used for the ten text chapters. Some instructors may find the price places consideration of this book as a required text out of bounds. It should also be noted that the authors spend no time discussing the area of evaluation of the online search service product, the problems involved in analyzing clientele information needs, or interviewing techniques as part of the search preparation process. The latter deficiencies may be the result of a concentration on hard science databases where ambiguity of disciplinary vocabulary is not the problem it is in the social sciences and humanities.

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