

tive job. It is possible that a more useful book might have resulted from more rigorous selection and exclusion of techniques with greater emphasis on critical evaluation of those included. On the other hand, it may be that we are not yet ready to distinguish between wheat and chaff. Certainly a detailed appraisal of each survey technique presented would have resulted in a formidable volume.

Perhaps the chief weakness of *The Library Survey* lies in the limitation of scope implied in the author's "role of reporter and commentator." Its emphasis on the collection of data and upon description of the conditions found, with comparative neglect of interpretation and synthesis, will distinctly limit the value of the book. Its failure to go far beyond the reporting of techniques which have been used in surveys also constitutes a definite limitation.

Almost every book on research methodology gives an impression of greater confidence than the author feels in the efficacy of the methods described. Mr. McDiarmid would be the first to deny the omnipotence of the survey as a device for curing all of our ills. He offers it only as one useful diagnostic technique, a technique whose value is distinctly limited by the absence of valid standards. The two books on methods of library research which we now have, *Investigating Library Problems* and *The Library Survey*, serve only to introduce us to the field. We still have a long way to go in shaping the method of science to our ends. These two volumes provide us with a substantial foundation.—G. Flint Purdy, *Wayne University, Detroit*.

*Practice of Book Selection: Papers Presented before the Library Institute at*

*the University of Chicago, July 31-August 31, 1939.* Louis R. Wilson, ed. University of Chicago Press, 1940. 368p. \$2.50.

THIS VOLUME comprises eighteen papers presented at the Fourth Library Institute of the University of Chicago.

Until a few years ago, the published guides to book selection consisted generally of selected lists of books, enumeration of book lists and journals of review, and some aphorisms designed to aid the librarian in avoiding pitfalls which occasionally engulf book selectors of varying degrees of experience. Recently, changes in trends of education and restatements of the objectives of the public library have encouraged more scientific investigations in the theory and practice of book selection, the results of which have been published in several significant treatises.

The *Practice of Book Selection*, however, does not follow the pattern of any of these earlier volumes in the field. The contributors include professors, editors, librarians, a college president, a bookseller, and a typographer; and the subject matter ranges from the selection of the manuscript for publication to the distribution and use by the public of the published volume.

The papers may be divided into six groups of uneven size and significance. Into three major groups may be placed fifteen of the papers: six on public, special, and high school and college libraries; five on literary criticism; and four on the publisher and designer as factors in selection. There is one paper each on distribution, as illustrated in the personal history of a book store; books and self-therapy; and the teaching of book selection. In the first group, Roden and Carnovsky dis-

cuss the general problem of selection for public libraries. Roden says:

Book selection is not a process that will soon or easily come to rest upon a scientific foundation to which all its implications can be referred or upon which all its problems can be solved.

He concludes, however, that the era upon which the public library is entering may be one in which its primary objectives will shift from recreational to educational. Carnovsky develops this theory in "Community Analysis" in which he argues for a library that will give the people what they need rather than what they want. Of more practical application for the librarian, at the moment, are two papers based on actual practice: "Selecting Books for a Technical Department" and "Organization of Internal Processes in Book Selection for Public Libraries." "Book Selection in a Modern High School" and "Book Selection in a Liberal Arts College" complete the group.

In "Contemporary Fiction and Non-Fiction," George Stevens, until recently editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, applies the glass to the book reviewer to show how hazardous, and why, has become the task of book selection. Max Lerner, in "Important Books of the Last One Hundred Years—Political Science, Economics, and Sociology," lists ninety-odd titles with plausible reasons for his selection. A quibbler might suggest other books of equal importance, but no one can deny the excellence of the list as it stands. Other papers in the second group include "Evaluation of Historical Writing" by Louis Gottschalk, "Literature as Propaganda" by Henry Hazlitt, and "Popularizing Science" by Kaempffert.

Some interesting and laudable experiments have been made by publishers in

recent years in the production of inexpensive, readable, and beautiful books. Illustrative of the papers in this group is Melcher's "The Publisher as a Factor in Popular Reading," in which he describes several of these experiments. He mentions, further, the publisher's influence in establishing new outlets for books, in making books more attractive in appearance, and in cooperative efforts to establish uniform prices throughout the country.

The *Practice of Book Selection* is the most interesting of the four volumes that have come from the Chicago institutes. It is addressed primarily to public librarians, but several of the papers have more general appeal, especially those on literary criticism. More attention to book selection in college and university libraries would have increased its usefulness. Without disparaging the quality of any of them, the space given to one or more of the papers might have been devoted to these institutional problems without appreciable loss to public librarians.

The readers of this volume would have been interested in the discussions which followed each lecture. In subsequent publications in this series, perhaps the essential and relevant portion of these discussions can be cited and included as appendices.—*Benjamin E. Powell, University of Missouri, Columbia.*

*How to Read a Book; the Art of Getting a Liberal Education.* Mortimer Adler. Simon and Schuster, 1940. 398p. \$2.50.

"THE FIRST RULE of the first reading of any book is to know what kind of book it is." So states the author on page 159 of the book under review. For those who have not yet read the book, it may be well to say what kind of book Mr. Adler