

Guide to Propaganda, Communication, and Public Opinion

Propaganda, Communication, and Public Opinion: A Comprehensive Reference Guide. By Bruce Lannes Smith, Harold D. Lasswell, and Ralph D. Casey. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1946. x, 435p.

Together with an earlier volume by the same team of authors in 1935 under the title *Propaganda and Promotional Activities*, this constitutes the most elaborate annotated bibliography in the rapidly growing field of mass communication. The 2600 titles listed in the present volume cover publications from mid-1934 to March 1943, and a substantial proportion of these are briefly annotated with respect to salient subject matter and social attributes of the author. As a guide to the major publications in this sphere, it has several distinctive advantages. Its plan of classification is such as to allow the reader to locate the specific materials he may be seeking in any specialized division of the larger field. Further aid to the location of bibliographic items is provided by elaborate author and subject indexes running to some 4500 separate entries. In a substantial proportion of cases, the reader is referred to biographical directories in which further information about selected authors is available. Insofar as it bears upon mass communications, the bibliography is clearly comprehensive, with no conspicuous oversights.

Precisely because the volume has so much to commend it, detailed attention should be given to its occasional shortcomings. First of all, the bibliography suffers from the defects of its qualities. The compilers have evidently ranged widely in many diverse literatures to collect hundreds of items which have only a tangential bearing upon mass communications. The very catholicity of the compilation lessens its specific usefulness. At times, the most germane items threaten to be swallowed up by those of questionable relevance. The neophyte may be confused when he explores a bibliography on propaganda, communication, and public opinion to find himself confronted (and I chose from a much more extended list) by references to works on fiscal policy and business cycles, the red army, a statistical yearbook of the trade in arms and ammunition, the city, the American college graduate,

and economic differentials in the probability of insanity. Now each of these works may be excellent in its own right, and the bibliographers may have attempted, properly enough, to avoid parochialism in their choice of materials, but the result is that these distantly related and dubiously collateral references constitute too large a proportion of the whole. At least, that is the judgment of this one reader. It would seem preferable to segregate these vaguely contextual sources from the materials dealing most directly with the ostensible subject-matter of the field under consideration.

There is, further, the appraisal of four prefatory essays on "the science of mass communication" (which run to about a fourth of the text). Following the organization of the bibliography, these essays are centered on the communicator, the channels and the content of communication, and its effects upon audiences. Presumably, these essays are designed to serve the admirable purpose of orienting others than the specialist in mass communication to the chief elements and structure of the field. The essays themselves are of distinctly uneven quality.

The account of the channels of communication, particularly the press and radio, by Ralph Casey is competent, well-organized and all too brief. He traces changes in the widening and deepening avenues of communication within the contexts of a developing democratic social structure, technological changes, and cumulative urbanization. His exposition gives evidence of an intimate and analytical knowledge of the field, as reflected, for example, in his treatment of the consolidation and integration of the mass media.

The essay by B. L. Smith on "the political communication specialist of our times," on the other hand, is heavily crowded with infelicities of various sorts. The greater part of the discussion is based upon six distinct tabulations based upon a grand total of sixteen cases (*i.e.* the heads of state of eight major powers and their propaganda ministers). One must agree with the author that this account involves "a provisional classification of highly insufficient data" and one may go further to question the worth of setting out the results

on estimated incomes, occupations, and education of the fathers of these sixteen individuals, their own exposure to "authoritative symbols of society," etc. It is a little disconcerting to find this slender base subjected to computations of percentages (to one and two decimals) just as it is distressing to read some of the *ad hoc* interpretations of the career-lines of these "political communication specialists."

Harold D. Lasswell, who, to the best of my knowledge, coined the now current term "content analysis," and who has contributed so largely to the development of this field, sets out the functions and the chief techniques for analyzing the content of communications. This compact and economical account, utilizing a series of concrete instances of content analysis should serve to acquaint the reader with the essential problems and procedures.

Modular Planning

Modular Planning for College and Small University Libraries. By Donald E. Bean and Ralph E. Ellsworth. [Iowa City, Iowa] Privately printed by the authors, 1948. 53p.

So-called "modular" planning for libraries has been talked about, and written about to a lesser extent, for more than ten years. The idea has been given impetus since the end of the war by the deliberations of the Cooperative Committee on Library Buildings, by the 1946 Institute of the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago, and by speeches and addresses at library meetings. The present volume, in its introduction and general comments, and in the basic plans included, attempts to be of practical assistance to those librarians who have already become interested through the more theoretical discussions which have appeared in print. It succeeds very well. It is difficult to say much more than this about a volume of this character.

It would be possible, of course, to produce here another essay on modular construction itself. Your reviewer has been a more or less active proponent of the idea since about 1937, when Alfred M. Githens, the architect, called upon him at the University of Chicago with plans for a building of this type which, alas, was never built. But such an essay would be out of place here, since it could not but

The final introductory essay, also by Professor Lasswell, deals with the "effects of communications." It is largely and inevitably devoted to a critical account of how the effects of communications might be studied since this division of the field contains strikingly few rigorous or systematic researches.

Whatever its limitations, the fact remains that no other bibliographic guide to mass communications approximates the value of the Smith-Lasswell-Casey volume. Since its appearance, the field has been growing at a rate considerably higher than that in the period covered by their book. Librarians, communications specialists, and interested laymen would all be benefited were the same team of authors to publish the third volume of their work in the near future.—*Robert K. Merton, Columbia University.*

duplicate in essence what the authors of the present volume have said very well indeed. They have listed clearly the advantages of modular construction. If they have not pointed out its disadvantages, it is probably because they do not exist except in theory and in the minds of a few die-hard conservatives, or with those who have axes to grind, like the representative of a company which manufactures multi-tier stacks who called upon me a few days ago.

Attention should be called, however, to two points which the authors make which have nothing to do with modular construction itself. The first of these is the emphasis they place upon the necessity for understanding between the librarian and the architect which will make it possible for the librarian to explain what is needed clearly enough so that the architect can translate these needs into steel and stone. Mr. Githens made this same point in his very admirable paper before the Graduate Library School Institute in 1946. It is one which needs constant emphasis. Proper use of the book under review will at least help the librarian to do this.

The other point is much more specific, but not much less important. It is the warning the authors sound against rule-of-thumb methods of determining space needs. Their emphasis on the effect of room shape and