

Review Articles

Basic Reference Sources

Basic Reference Sources: An Introduction to Materials and Methods. By Louis Shores. Chicago, American Library Association, 1954. 378 p. \$6.25.

Although based on the author's *Basic Reference Books*, this work is not identified as a third edition of that text because of certain changes in plan and emphasis. Like its predecessor, it aims to present the content of a general reference course, with, according to the preface, greater emphasis on non-book materials and more attention to reference practice. Although the changes in plan and emphasis are perhaps less extensive than the preface might seem to suggest, all appear highly advantageous, and examination indicates that the work fulfills its stated purpose admirably.

An introductory chapter, "The Practice of Reference," treats very briefly the place of reference work in library organization, with definitions and explanations of the six component functions. The remaining chapters are concerned with reference materials, general and specialized, with emphasis on types. Some 554 basic titles are included, in contrast to 172 in the earlier work, though the latter listed 254 additional titles for general acquaintance. Each chapter contains a list of typical reference questions culled from the experience of reference librarians in various libraries—a feature sure to interest students. Almost every chapter concludes with a reading list, though unfortunately the items so listed are not included in the index. Dr. Shores' background comments on the history of specific titles or types should be of much interest to students since such information does much to humanize these keys to knowledge at which many are prone to look askance or to take for granted. The lucid and straightforward style, excellent format, pleasing and inviting pages, should do much to facilitate and encourage the reading of these meaty chapters.

In Part I, the general section, some 270 specific titles are introduced to the student. Among innovations are the chapters devoted

to how-to-do-it books, which Dr. Shores calls "Manuals" and to audio-visual sources, both very helpful and practical. The treatment of maps, atlases, gazetteers and guidebooks together in the chapter "Geographical Sources" is a great improvement over the former edition where maps and atlases were grouped with indexes to pictures as "Representations," a somewhat artificial heading, and guidebooks and gazetteers were with "Directories."

Part II leads the student at least over the threshold of many inviting areas. The subject fields are here grouped under Librarianship; History and Auxiliary Studies; The Social Sciences; The Sciences—Pure and Applied; and The Humanities. As the author clearly states, the treatment in subject fields is necessarily of an introductory nature. Chapter 18, "The Sciences," is the work of Helen Folke of Western Reserve University, who introduces the student competently to a few of the principal sources and characteristics of reference work in the field. The chapter on the humanities contains, besides art, music, literature, philosophy and religion, a section labelled "Recreatory Arts" which includes the dance, games and sports.

It is a well recognized fact that bibliographies are in one sense out of date by the time of publication, so quickly do new titles appear. It does seem unfortunate, however, that the closing date for the inclusion of titles was December 1951, and publication date June 4, 1954, an interval of two and a half years. Thus many extremely important new titles were necessarily omitted. In a work of this excellence and with titles so wisely chosen, it is hardly fair to mention omissions. Nevertheless, bearing the closing date in mind, some librarians will regret the absence of Clarence S. Brigham's *History and Bibliography of American Newspapers 1690-1920* (1947), as a source for locating files of earlier newspapers in connection with the listing of *American Newspapers 1821-1936: a Union List*. In the brief treatment of retrospective British national bibliography, the omission of the *Short Title Catalogue 1475-1640*, by A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, and its continuation by Donald Wing, is disappoint-

ing. *Les Sources du Travail Bibliographique*, Vol. I (1950), by L. N. Malclès, is mentioned as a source of information on foreign encyclopedias, but not, surprisingly, as a source on general and national bibliographies. That boon in questions of scientific bibliography, *Poggendorff's biographisch literarisches Handwörterbuch* (1863-) is absent, though the Royal Society of London *Catalogue of Scientific Papers* is included. The very popular *Rider Television Manual* (1948-) is omitted while the same publisher's *Perpetual Trouble Shooter's Manual* is mentioned, though this is possibly taken care of by a statement that there are manuals for television. The *Oxford Companion to the Theatre* (1951) is conspicuously absent, though the other "Companions" are included. In the reading lists at the end of the chapters, every teacher will undoubtedly want to add a few favorites in lieu of some of those chosen, but on the whole these readings bring a sampling of stimulating professional literature into the student's orbit of work.

To do justice to all the strong points and special features of this notable work is impossible within the compass of this review. The information given about the various titles is remarkably clear, helpful, and accurate for the editions described. Although the titles included are generally popular and readily available, yet a fair number of the basic scholarly tools, even a few in foreign languages, are presented. Dr. Shores, to his credit, has not acceded to the plea, voiced sometimes in library circles, to reduce the titles included in a basic reference course, to the lowest common denominator of availability and popularity. Among other commendable features—to mention only a few—are: the excellent, clear treatment of government publications; the discussion of subscription books in the chapter on encyclopedias; and the simple but excellent instruction in bibliographic form given in Chapter I.

As a textbook in a basic reference or information services course—whatever its title—this work should meet a genuine need, as did its predecessor. Every word in the text, laden with common sense advice culled from practical experience, should be helpful and stimulating to beginners in the field. The very existence of many of these titles will be a revelation to the student. For those students who

find themselves, as many will, in school and small college or public libraries where subject departmentalization exists, if at all, to a very small degree, this introduction to some of the more generally useful reference sources both general and in subject fields, will form an excellent minimum basis or springboard from which to build and extend this knowledge. For those who intend to specialize immediately in a subject area or in the general bibliographical services offered in general reference departments of certain large public and university libraries, this synthesis of information about general and specialized sources will form an indispensable background and adjunct to further intensified concentration in the chosen field—either on the job or through additional courses. As Dr. Shores points out, the chapters in Part II may well be used, also, as a supplementary text in the bibliographic courses now offered in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. Library school students equipped with this text, together with Constance Winchell's *Guide to Reference Books* for reference use, and Margaret Hutchins' fine *Introduction to Reference Work*, cited frequently in the reading lists, for a much more extended treatment of the principles and methods of reference work, are fortunate indeed. Although its primary use will, of course, be as a textbook in library schools, the usefulness of *Basic Reference Sources* to reference librarians on the job and to library inquirers who want to know something about reference materials, should not be overlooked.—*Mary N. Barton, Enoch Pratt Free Library.*

Modern Bibliography

Notes on Modern Bibliography. By Ronald Staveley. London, The Library Association, 1954. viii, 111p. 10 s.

This is a good book. It contains nothing new, but makes a major contribution through synthesis. It is readable and informative, and expresses more fully than any other single source the evolving concept of bibliography as a combination of what might be termed conventional bibliography and what many have termed documentation. In its early phase bibliography was the study of production of manuscripts and books, which is now termed