

Review Articles

Americana

U.S. Iana (1650-1950), A Selective Bibliography . . . Rev. and enlarged edition. Comp. by Wright Howes. New York: R. R. Bowker Company for the Newberry Library, 1962. 652p. \$25.00.

The first edition of Wright Howes's *U.S. Iana* went out of print within two months of publication. This revised edition is all the more welcome because of the enforced deprivation of the title in many libraries in whose collections it should be. The new edition will be a boon in libraries which have not owned a copy of the first edition; it is different enough, too, from the earlier edition to be worth having in the libraries which do have the 1954 issue.

Mr. Howes has extended the coverage of the book back a half century. He has added other new entries. His notes of approximate evaluations have been broken into better price bracketings. His occasional notes are pertinent, sometimes amusingly incisive. His symbolization for location is useful. In short, the second edition of *U.S. Iana* is an old friend grown larger and wiser.

There are definite limitations in the scope and usefulness of *U.S. Iana*. It should not be used without an understanding of its purpose and of the restrictions imposed for the inclusion of an entry. Its indications of rarity must be taken only as indications, not as binding figures. Its arrangement on the scheme of a bookseller's notebook entries rather than by standard library entries requires some study by anyone else.

Familiarity will not bring contempt for *U.S. Iana*. It will make an obviously useful library tool ever more useful. It will have its own rewards as a short cut to a knowledge of most of the corpus of Americana. It will provide the answers for a myriad of questions by librarians and by readers.

U.S. Iana is an indispensable book—and is likely to remain so.—Richard Harwell, *Bowdoin College Library*.

Almanacs of the United States. By Milton Drake. New York: Scarecrow Press, 1962. 2v. \$35.

In a Baltimore almanac for 1783 Andrew Ellicott wrote: "One year passeth away and another cometh—so likewise 'tis with almanacks—they are annual productions, whose destination and usefulness is temporary, and afterwards are thrown by and consigned to oblivion . . . it is no wonder, when they become old almanacks, that we frequently see them made use of by the pastry-cooks, or flying in the tail of the school-boy's kite." Almanacs were calculated to be thrown away; they were printed on poor paper and were not bound; indeed the word almanac is synonymous with ephemeris. It thus appears little short of miraculous that compiler Milton Drake is able in this bibliography to identify no fewer than 14,300 almanacs which were published in the eastern United States before 1850 and in the western states before 1875. His estimate that more than half of the titles he lists have never before appeared in a bibliography is easy to accept. He locates almost seventy-five thousand copies in 558 collections. Truly his search has been an exhaustive one.

Almanacs of the United States fills what was a near vacuum, as there had been little previous attempt to identify them. H. A. Morrison's *Checklist of American Almanacs* before 1800, issued in 1906, was a bold effort to accomplish what was for that time an impossible task. There have been articles written since that time, and of course the American Imprints Inventory did its excellent work, but these new volumes are the first full dress attempt to bring under bibliographical control the myriad almanacs which, together with Bibles and Webster's blue-back spellers, comprised the libraries of America's frontiersmen.

Entries in the present list are geographical by state and chronological within each state, then alphabetical by main entry. This is probably the best arrangement possible, but it does render difficult the following through

of the history of a serial title. Added features include the entry number for the first almanac recorded in each of 362 towns from Eastport Maine and Oahu Hawaii, a list of the libraries and private collections searched, and a good bibliography. Information is brief and almost always uniform. Although the work is a check list and not a "bibliographer's bibliography," it bids fair to remain a definitive check list for a long time.

To a cursory reading, *Almanacs of the United States* appears relatively free of typographical errors, although there is an errata slip tipped in. The book is neatly and serviceably printed from cold type. Some critics might attempt to attach the pejorative term "antiquarian" to these 1,397 pages and ask if indeed the study needed to have been made; Terence on the other hand would no doubt have felt that almanacs deserve study because they exist. At any rate it will not be denied that the compiler has herein preserved a record of passing Americana that could easily have been lost. Any bibliographer who has ever attempted to locate an almanac for collation or other purposes will bless Milton Drake.—*David Kaser, Joint University Libraries, Nashville.*

Computers and the Library

Advanced Data Processing in the University Library. By Louis A. Schultheiss, Don S. Culbertson, Edward M. Heiliger. New York: Scarecrow Press, 1962. xiv, 388p. \$10.

At the Miami Beach Conference in 1962, the authors of this book and Gregory P. Williams, their consultant, reported on the project at the University of Illinois Congress Circle campus to study the use of computers in library technical processes. Mr. Williams warned that the book is not a "cookbook." No one can take this book, go to his library, and put everything on punched cards or magnetic tape. This book is a final report on a project for which the Council on Library Resources gave \$50,000, and the University of Illinois contributed an extra \$2,000 plus. The money was used completely, and I think it was very well spent. The results as reported in this book show that college and university libraries, especially, must start to think of computers as a means of reducing

costs in the library, and the book explains how to do the thinking.

One of the first decisions of the project staff was not to consider information storage and retrieval systems which are even now in too parlous a state for anyone to reach definite conclusions at this time. Other decisions were rather forced on the staff as they went along. There was constant concern over the attitudes of staff toward the machines, relieved to some extent by essays which enabled staff members to say what they thought. There was worry as well over maintaining service standards, and there were great hopes for the computers to take over large segments of the library routines, hopes that were then unrealized and may be in part unrealizable.

But even if the project had concluded that computers could do nothing for a library, the report would have been valuable and the grant worthwhile. As it is, an important—indeed vital—result of the study is in the report for all to see. The charts, representing a step-by-step analysis of the routines of technical processing, are a kind of anatomy of the methods by which a book is purchased and prepared for storage and for use. The cost analysis of these routines with and without computers gives us a clear picture of what a respectable university library has to spend to get a book into its collection and into its records, to keep track of serials, and to provide service to those who wish to borrow books.

Because colleges and universities are installing computer equipment for other purposes, and because the library can arrange to get time on these machines, it is essential for librarians to investigate methods of programming their operations. The report is, at times, a little vague about these methods, but they are not so complicated as may seem. Any librarian can devise a computer program of a given routine by pretending that he is explaining it to a village idiot who can understand only those questions which can be answered by yes or by no and can follow only one direction at a time.

Computers are giant brains in size but not in mental capacity. The refinements of Boolean algebra and mathematical logic are an essential element of computer programming, but there is really no need to study physiology and hydrodynamics if you want to learn to swim. There is really no need for