

Review Articles

The American Reading Public: What It Reads; Why It Reads: From Inside Education and Publishing: Views of Present Status and Future Trends, The Daedalus Symposium, with Rebuttals and Other New Material. Edited by Roger H. Smith. New York: R. R. Bowker, [1963], 268p. \$7.95. (63-22265).

Except for a minority of essays concerning the use of books in the teaching field *The American Reading Public* includes little to justify its title. For the most part it is a record of men eminent in publishing and closely allied fields indulging in a sort of communal omphaloskepsis. The result is an articulate, erudite, even informative collection, but it tells about the American reading public only by inference.

The chief virtue of *The American Reading Public* is not that it says much that is not generally known, but that it presents its case (or cases) in polished prose rather than in the jargon of the educator, the social scientist, or the pollster. Reuben A. Brower's "Book Reading and the Reading of Books" deserves the widest possible audience. Dan Lacy's "The Economics of Publishing, or Adam Smith and Literature" is very nearly a definitive statement. So is Roger Shugg's "The Professors and Their Publishers." Herbert R. Mayes's "Reflections—On the Magazine Past, on the Magazine Future" is one of the two contributions in the volume that lacks literary polish, but as an unabashed love letter to the magazine as an institution it is delightful in its own way. *Daedalus'* review of *Catch-22* is already well on the way towards becoming a classic. Its inclusion as the endpiece of this volume is well advised.

What do we learn here? That the teaching of reading needs drastic improvement. That paperbacks are the boon and the glory of American publishing. That publishing is a business. That the system (if such it may be called) for distributing books is abysmally bad. That bookshops are too few. That paperbacks are a boon and a blessing. That the potential market for books is growing. That

libraries must have broad financial support by government. That paperbacks are a boon and a boomerang. That American book reviewing is bad and getting no better. That *Catch-22* is a pretentious exercise in bad writing.

The preoccupation with the difficulties of the publishing business grows a little stale. (Frederick A. Praeger's statement of his personal view of publishing is therefore refreshing indeed.) So does the preoccupation with paperbacks; that revolution now has been long accomplished. In what sort of ivory executive suite has Marshall Best (chairman of the executive committee of Viking Press) been if he really believes his remark that "libraries, which some authors regard as their stake in immortality, cannot now use paperbound books"? Excoriating the review media is flaying a dead horse.

It has all—at least, nearly all—been said before, but it is said extremely well and in a single package in *The American Reading Public*.

Of special interest to members of ACRL because of the association's sponsorship of *CHOICE* should be the essays on reviewing by Henri Peyre and John Hollander, both of Yale. Peyre is at his usual best in being charmingly erudite. Hollander is equally entertaining and a bit more specific. One passage in his essay certainly deserves quoting as setting a goal for *CHOICE* if that magazine is to be anything more than *The Booklist* junior grade:

What is needed is a weekly periodical devoted to book reviews (and perhaps to film, music, and art chronicles also), and with a circulation well over one hundred thousand across the country. It should have an editorial board to produce the publication, and a separate advisory board, working part time, to do the vital work of assigning space to books, and reviews to reviewers, as well as combing the nation for competent, spirited, and willing reviewers. These would probably continue to be academics, journalists (although I suspect fewer of them than are currently put to work at reviewing by the newspapers), and novelists; scientists who can and do write would have to be recruit-

ed from the pages of professional journals like *Science*. Payment for writing would have to exceed the literary quarterlies by at least fivefold. None of the reviewers would have to be put in the position of being "regulars," lest they stagnate, nor must they be overworked, lest they come to view writing for the magazine as a chore. The orientation of the whole enterprise must by no means be exclusively literary, and its commitment should always be to the life of the mind, its sole *raison d'être*.

Have we set our sights too low?

But—and here is the kicker—Mr. Hollander then notes: "At a casual estimate, this would cost at least \$750,000 a year."—Richard Harwell, *Bowdoin College*.

Indexing Theory, Indexing Methods, and Search Devices. By Frederick Jonker. New York: Scarecrow Press, 1964. 124p. \$4. (64-11785).

Indexing is not a new subject to the librarian. It is taught extensively in library schools, and the professional literature abounds with definitive works and treatises on methods and practice. With the growth of scientific and technical literature and the advent of automation, deeper studies have been made to increase knowledge and understanding of the weaknesses and strengths of conventional techniques. Documentalists have explored unconventional avenues of research. The field is therefore in a receptive mood to welcome a solid book on indexing which sets forth the general principles of the science. In this respect, the text under review falls nowhere near the target.

Rather than advancing a major theory, or even evaluating current methods, the book only verbalizes some unsteady personal observations of its author. This alone is confusing because the text is couched in the author's private, technical vocabulary. He speaks of the "terminological continuum," "access guides," "living language," "unpermuted multiple-criterion classification," "systematicity," etc. Not one of these words and phrases is explained in terms of their relationship to established definitions or doctrine. The bibliography reflects a shallow appreciation of standard source material.

Evidently only slight attention was given

to page makeup and editorial organization. Several of the illustrations are too small to decipher, and some graphs are either partially or completely unlabeled. A misspelled word appears on the table of contents page, and others are conspicuous through the book. An entire section listed in the table of contents is missing from the text.—Joseph Becker, *Washington, D.C.*

Library Administration: Theory and Practice. By R. L. Mittal. Delhi: Metropolitan Book Company, 1964. xiv, 514p. \$5.50.

Believing as he does that the standard works in library administration, foreign and domestic, have an "alien background" and fail to meet the needs of Indian students and librarians, the deputy librarian of Panjab University library has written this book "to present in a compendious form various principles and practices concerning [the] administration of libraries."

Mr. Mittal's compendium opens with three chapters on the "Philosophy of Librarianship," "Library in Education," and "Library Administration: Function and Principles." These are followed by a discussion of principles of personnel administration and library finance. Some later chapters outline in great detail the activities and operations of libraries in the manner of a staff manual: "Processing Work," "Maintenance Work," "Stacking and Shelving Methods," "Care and Repair of Books," "Periodicals Work," "Library Rules and Regulations," and "Charging and Discharging Methods." Toward the middle of the book there is a chapter on reference service in which the author offers his *Odyssey* of reference books. This change in menu is a welcome relief but, in view of the author's stated purpose, it is surprising to find his annotated list of reference works so heavily slanted toward American publications. There is an index but no separate bibliography.

This book, I am sure, will prove a useful contribution to Indian librarians and Indian students of librarianship. In a sense it is a kind of reference work and it suffers some of the weaknesses of a reference book which was not designed as such. Quotations, formulae, statistics, names, and footnotes shuf-