

Book Reviews

Reference Work and Its Tools. By A. K. Mukherjee. Calcutta: World Press Private Ltd., 1964. 335p. Rs 20.00; 30s. 6d.

The chief librarian of Jadavpur University has endorsed the liberal or maximum theory of reference work in an introduction which combines a discussion of its philosophy, concepts and principles, nature and techniques, and organization, with a guide to a selected list of useful reference tools. This theory, according to Mr. Mukherjee, "takes its stand on the delectable doctrine of direct provision of information and unavoidable obligation of the library, and obviously develops as a corollary of the original concept."

The proliferation of the literature of science, social sciences, and the humanities, and the increased amount of research requires more extensive reference service, made more difficult because of the inadequacy of abstracting journals, indexes and bibliographies, the varied forms of publication, and the increase in interdisciplinary approaches in modern research. Within this setting the author outlines fourteen categories of work which include not only answering inquiries, preparing bibliographies, assisting readers in the use of the library and interlibrary loan, but also maintaining special indexing and abstracting services, providing a translation service, collecting information regarding library resources, and cooperating with bibliographical centers and union catalogs. Documentation work and documentation service are further discussed and their processes briefly outlined. The nature of reference service in different types of libraries—public, college, university, school and special—is summarized.

One chapter on library organization gives instruction on building the reference collection, evaluation of reference tools, qualifications of the reference librarian, interlibrary loan, and organization of material. The latter visualizes a centralized reference department, "which is in a more favorable position to offer reference service than a decentralized and scattered network of sectional or departmental ones." Mr. Mukherjee recommends that the reference books be shelved according to the categories under

which he has treated them in his chapter on reference tools: "Dictionary, Encyclopedia, Geographical Reference, Year Book & Almanacs, Biographical Dictionary, Educational Reference, Directory, Handbook and Manual, Bibliography, Serials' Reference, and Government Documents." With this arrangement there may be some disagreement, especially among American librarians whose reference collections are classified according to the scheme used for the rest of their collections.

Nor will American librarians find the chapter on 643 reference tools particularly useful, since it is unfortunately marred by inconsistencies in bibliographic form, typographical errors in names of authors and publishers, failure to note the most recent editions, and in a few cases, questionable assignment of a title to a particular form. General characteristics and uses are given for each category, but descriptions of individual titles must be sought in a separate chapter which gives descriptive annotations of 265 titles, most but not all of which are included in the classified section.

It is difficult to defend the alphabetical title arrangement of the annotated list of Western reference books, and equally difficult to defend the two alphabetically arranged appended lists, one entitled *Indian Reference Tools (Conventional)*, the other, *Indological Source Materials*. All three would be more useful if prefaced by a clear statement of the criteria for their selection, which are not readily apparent from an examination of the lists.

A short bibliography lists twenty standard guides to reference materials and reference work, which may be used by the student to augment the highly condensed text. The author is to be commended for covering such a wide range of topics in such a small volume.—*Frances Neel Cheney, George Peabody College.*

Libraries and Universities; Addresses and Reports. By Paul Buck. Edited by Edwin E. Williams. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964. 172p. \$3.95.

Paul Buck has had a distinguished career

as scholar, teacher, author, university administrator, and librarian. He began teaching history at Harvard in 1926. In 1938 he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in History for his *The Road to Reunion*. Drafted into administrative service in 1942 as dean of the Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences, he was made provost of the university in 1945. Ten years later he became director of the university library, continuing in this position until 1964 when he gave up his administrative duties to devote himself to research and writing.

This small volume consists of addresses, articles, and excerpts from reports written by Professor Buck during his tenure as director of the library. The sixteen selections fall into three categories. The first is a statement of Professor Buck's personal credo with respect to the research library in a university. These chapters are forthright and eloquent expressions of his conviction of the importance of libraries. A second category deals with general matters—"Are Libraries Here to Stay?" "Prospects of the American University," and "The Historian, the Librarian and the Businessman." The remaining chapters concern the library situation at Harvard. They discuss such topics as the importance of the library to the university, the organizational policy known as "coordinated decentralization," the library's personnel program, and the new circulation system. Together they constitute a useful body of information about the administrative problems of the country's largest academic library and what has been done toward solving them.

Beyond its factual content the book is significant for several reasons. Harvard's decision to appoint Paul Buck to the library directorship came as a surprise to many academic librarians. By this appointment the university acknowledged both the importance of the job and the urgent need to strengthen the library, to increase its financial support, and to relate it more closely to the academic program. Presumably only a person of unusual stature in the university, one who already enjoyed the confidence of Harvard trustees, faculty, and administration could achieve these ends. That this assumption is now generally accepted at Harvard is shown by the recent appointment as director of another distinguished scholar-administrator, Professor Merle Fain-

sod, director of the Russian Research Center.

Paul Buck's nine-year administration of the Harvard libraries was, as this volume attests, a successful one. He quickly familiarized himself with the library and won the confidence of the staff. With the assistance of his colleagues and with the support of the faculty and the administration he obtained increased funds for the library, developed a new personnel program, improved coordination of the ninety decentralized units, and made the library more responsive to faculty and student needs. These are substantial accomplishments for which Professor Buck deserves a large measure of credit.

Throughout his administration Professor Buck devoted considerable attention to interpreting the library to users, administrators, trustees, and staff. He realized that the library's development depended upon wide spread understanding of its importance and needs and that he was in a strategic position to further this understanding. In his annual reports, in talks to the Board of Overseers, and in his appeal for the fundraising campaign known as "A Program for Harvard College" he explained why a great library is essential to a university and why such a library must have adequate support. Through his affirmation of the value of the research library Professor Buck performed a useful service for all academic librarians. Any library director faced with the need to justify an enlarged budget request will find encouragement and ammunition in Paul Buck's writings.

Professor Buck nowhere implies that the administrative arrangements which work well at Harvard should necessarily be copied by other institutions. Harvard's library is unusual in its size, its complexity, its historical development, and its relationship to the academic divisions of the university. Harvard administrators have been resourceful in discovering new devices and procedures (and in rationalizing existing ones) which fit local circumstances, e.g., "coordinated decentralization" for departmental libraries, separate professional status for the library staff, and the distinguished scholar-administrator as director of the library. But while other librarians may adopt different administrative practices, they would agree wholeheartedly with the goals

which Professor Buck set for the Harvard library: adequate financing, a capable staff, well-selected and accessible collections, responsiveness to the needs of users, and an informed constituency. In working effectively toward these goals and in helping those both inside and outside the library to understand them Professor Buck has served Harvard well and has earned the respect of all academic librarians—*Andrew J. Eaton, Washington University.*

Technical Libraries: Users and Their Demands. By Margaret Slater. Aslib, 1964. 126p. 26s.

This report gives the chief results of a pilot study on the use made of a selected number of technical libraries located in Greater London during 1962 and 1963. The study was carried out by the Aslib research department of which Miss Slater is a staff member. Since a subsequent larger-scale study is to be undertaken the author cautions the reader that this is an interim report and that the findings are preliminary.

The three prime aims of this study are:

1. "to discover what items of information or documents customers seek, why they seek them and how they obtain them."
2. "to test a hypothesis; that it is possible to classify customers into user groups possessing recognisable common features and characteristic behaviour patterns, and to classify group needs."
3. "to measure the demand on librarians and libraries, in terms of expenditure of their time and skill, and use of stock made by different user groups."

Responses were obtained from the users of libraries of thirteen industrial firms (212 users), six academic institutions (223 users), four learned societies (79 users), and two government laboratories (75 users). Broad subject coverage was achieved as practically all types of scientific and technical backgrounds were represented in the 583 persons contributing directly to the study. The questionnaire sought to determine: (1) background information about the respondent; (2) information about the particular demand on the library service described in the questionnaire (purpose, relationship to user's normal work, degree of success, category of document used, search

time taken, etc.); and (3) information about the extent of participation of librarian and user in the search.

Analysis of the data gathered was carried out by discipline, by type of employer, and by type and level of job. The results reveal nothing particularly different from those produced by previous use studies of technical libraries. Periodicals remain the chief vehicle for the transfer of scientific and technical information. Most data sought is directly related to the immediate work of the individual involved. Needed data first is sought in personal files, by questioning colleagues, or in handbooks, before the search is carried to the library. Many users do not use the services and skills of the librarian efficiently. The scientist relies less on the librarian for help than does his engineer counterpart. Most users seldom go beyond their own library in the search. Eighty-three per cent report success in their searches and, in general, the user feels that the library service rendered is excellent. An accessible location is a tremendous incentive to frequent library use.

These are some of the findings. None are really new or startling. Little real evidence is offered to support the hypothesis that customers of technical libraries can be classified into meaningful user groups. Nevertheless, administrators of technical libraries will find this to be an interesting and, perhaps, useful report. It brings together in one cover information on the habits of the users of several kinds of technical libraries. While it may not provide sufficient evidence for the general application of its finding to a particular technical library it does by raising many questions provide library administrators with a checklist of pertinent points which should be considered for efficient and flexible service. It is hoped that the projected larger study will provide more answers to many of the questions raised in this pilot report.—*E. G. Roberts, Georgia Tech.*

Libraries and Automation. Proceedings of the Conference on Libraries and Automation Held at Airlie Foundation, Warrenton, Virginia, May 26-30, 1963.

The Airlie Conference on Libraries and Automation was held in the summer of 1963 under the sponsorship of the Library of Congress, the National Science Foundation, and the Council on Library Resources.