

cussed in addition to the mechanical details.

These points are touched upon briefly in the *Proceedings*. There is room for another conference to digest the data and opinions brought into the open at Airlie. The *Proceedings* constitute a most valuable source of data and opinion relating to library automation.—Alan M. Rees, *Western Reserve University*.

Encyclopaedias: Their History Throughout the Ages. A Bibliographical Guide with Extensive Historical Notes to the General Encyclopaedias Issued Throughout the World from 350 B.C. to the Present Day. By Robert Collison. New York & London, Hafner Publishing Company, 1964. 319p. \$7.50.

Mr. Collison, librarian of the BBC reference library, has compiled several volumes for which reference librarians and students have been grateful. His most recent contribution puts us further in his debt, for he has brought together a quantity of information in this book on encyclopedias. It is more ambitious in plan and in scope than his books on bibliographies and dictionaries, since it is in the form of an historical narrative and aims at comprehensiveness.

The narrative begins with the Greek sources of the western encyclopedic tradition and ends with references to new encyclopedias. It includes whole chapters on Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, on the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and on the various publications of the firm of Brockhaus. A chronology of significant dates and an introduction discussing some of the problems involved in the production of encyclopedias precedes the main text, and following it are a general bibliography, a list of encyclopedias not mentioned in the text, and a reprint of Coleridge's "Preliminary Treatise on Method" from the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana*.

The chronological arrangement adopted by the author presents difficulties which he has not entirely overcome. It is not possible, for example, easily to trace the development of encyclopedia making in any one country or culture because the only grouping by language is an incomplete list of lesser works in the appendix. Mr. Collison's accounts of the Arabic and Chinese encyclopedic traditions are practically worthless since he only provides brief descriptions of

individual titles dispersed throughout the text. Index entries for languages or countries would have partially solved this problem, but the index to the book is limited to personal names and titles. It is incomplete even in these.

The author's intention as to scope is not clear. The title indicates that the book is confined to general encyclopedias but there is a section on modern encyclopedias in special subject fields at the end of the last chapter. Coverage of Asian works is very uneven; for example, no Japanese titles are mentioned. Numerous works of minor importance in western languages are included, but others of equal claims are missing. Few important titles were overlooked, but surely the East German version of "Meyer" is worth mentioning.

The treatment of individual works is mostly limited to externals of bibliographic detail, publishing history, and arrangement. The amount of space devoted to individual titles is not always in proportion to their importance—twenty lines is hardly adequate, for example, for the *Enciclopedia Italiana*. Judgments expressed are the conventional ones, although most readers would not agree that the contents of the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* "were kept within the mental range of the average man."

References are provided in the text and at the end of chapters, as well as in the general bibliography. They are not as complete or as precise as one could wish; a listing of Templeman's and Wright's *Bibliographies of Studies in Victorian Literature* is not very helpful, and it is unfortunate that the only recent substantial discussion of the principles of encyclopedia making (in the September 1962 issue of the *American Behavioral Scientist*) should have been overlooked.

In spite of its imperfections, Mr. Collison's book, as the first attempt at a comprehensive account of the development of the general encyclopedia, will undoubtedly be useful. By indirectly exposing the shallowness of our present knowledge, it can perhaps serve another purpose in encouraging reference librarians and students to undertake more specialized studies in order to enrich our understanding of these important reference works.—Marjorie Karlson, *Washington University*. ■ ■