

## Book Reviews

***The Librarian and the Machine: Observations on the Applications of Machines in Administration of College and University Libraries.*** By Paul Wasserman. Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1965. 170p. \$5.75 (65-25320).

This is a sane book in the insane world of academic librarianship. Temperate and calm, it is eminently readable, has a useful "reading list," and is adequately indexed. Without entering the soggy field of library philosophy and arraying our Big-endians against our Little-endians, Dr. Wasserman, presently dean of Maryland's graduate library school, believes we must adapt the machine to do our data processing even while we wait, in civilized expectancy, to be shown whether it can indeed retrieve information from large general collections at a price we can afford. His evaluation of the advantages automation will bring and his words of caution regarding expectations and operations are judicious and thoughtful. The academic librarian would do well to force the book upon his computer science people and the faculties of his science departments. It might spare him the vast amount of gratuitous but frequently fatuous advice he receives in such quantity.

The author looks both backward and forward. He notes the belated impact the computer has had on libraries. He also examines the Florida Atlantic experiment, the Columbia-Harvard-Yale medical libraries project, and a few of the other attempts to cope not only with the so-called information explosion, but, more importantly, with the burgeoning record-keeping accompanying it. He reports, but does not really judge, or even evaluate, these efforts. Since his book was conceived there have been small indications, at least, that some of the efforts are not achieving the success we had hoped they would. None of us is likely to tout his failures, but Dean Wasserman pays indirect tribute to those who have made our mistakes for us. Dean Wasserman briefly but specifically surveys coordinate indexing, the key-word-in-context indexes, MEDLARS, and selective dissemination of information. This is a useful summary, but more important is his recognition of the profession's

desperate need for user studies. He is probing one of our sore spots here, but performing a service the while.

The various roles our professional organizations, the computer companies, research scientists, and business and industry have played in bringing us to an awareness of what computers can do for librarianship are touched on. While recognizing, but not belaboring, the fact that librarians are wary of computers, Dean Wasserman, perhaps in charity, does not finger the library schools as the villains of his piece. He recognizes that our whole profession suffers from the fact that for years non-selective admission policies and low financial rewards have produced librarians sketchily educated in the genteel disciplines (English, history, music, or even, heaven forbid, French!) who are hostile to machine techniques. He has sympathy for the human problems involved, but is hopeful that an increasing awareness of the need for experimentation and change will move us further along the road from amateurism to professionalism.

If the book has a fault, it is that his comments on the quality of the new men—that exciting bunch of madmen and mechanics, dreamers and scholars—who hopefully will give us the leadership we need so badly, are curiously understated. Perhaps he is going out of his way to reassure those of us who do not know COBAL from Cockney that we need not fear for the traditional value and functions of librarianship. In fact, the growing number of lively young men like those in the select Committee on Library Automation is one of the bright spots of the profession. Not only have they "savvy" and style, but they know library problems and have demonstrated an impressive professional competence. A few of them are even bookmen!

Paul Wasserman merits our thanks for his "observations."—*Stuart Forth, University of Kentucky.*

***Ontario Libraries, a Province-wide Survey and Plan, 1965.*** By Francis R. St. John Library Consultants, Inc., Toronto: Ontario Library Association, 1965. 182 p. \$2. (Cover-title: A Survey of Libraries in the Province of Ontario).