

from which the students have come are not, over the length and breadth of the country, at all well provided with school libraries, and among them the qualified school librarian is virtually unknown. The fact that the students did not pass beyond the compulsory schooling age of fifteen may partially be attributed to their relatively low interest in reading. They have not in many instances been regular users of public library services. In other words, they come to the college with an inadequate background of library usage. Their success in their course work and their subsequent career will, however, depend to some extent (however small) on their ability to utilize the college libraries. The library must also cooperate in the task of helping to fill some of the deficiencies in general education. This, at any rate, is a part of the act of faith which lay behind the postwar expansion of libraries in such institutions.

The authors of this composite work are, for the most part, actively engaged in this challenging, even if somewhat forlorn, area of librarianship. The chapters deal with the actual presentation of material for certain categories of student as well as the more vexing question of the role of the library as a liberalizing influence amid a welter of vocational courses. The book gives a clear idea of the problems which are being faced, and the enthusiasm of those engaged in the battle can easily be deduced.—*Roy Stokes, Loughborough Technical College.*

Report on Project History Retrieval. Tests and Demonstrations of an Optic-Coincidence System of Information Retrieval for Historic Materials. By Elizabeth Ingerman Wood. Philadelphia: Drexel Institute of Technology, Graduate School of Library Science, c.1966 (Drexel Library School Series Number 14). xiii, 123p. \$3. (66-21944).

Mrs. Wood's book is a description of a system of information retrieval called optic-coincidence. In brief, the system works in this manner. Each item, document, book, print, or what have you, is described on an index form by author, title, and/or other appropriate entries. Each item is numbered. Characteristics, or descriptors, akin to subject headings, which best fit the piece at hand, are chosen from a master list. A

gridded card for each characteristic is made and a hole is drilled in it at the coordinates which indicate the serial number of each item having this description. Finally, the user selects term cards which best describe the questions he has in mind, piles them together and shines a light through the lot. The places where the light comes through indicates the serial numbers of items in the collection which fill the reader's requirements. The reader then goes to the numbered index forms, as provided by the grid coordinates, and compiles a list of materials he wishes to use in the depository. Each term card, measuring about 8" x 10", has locations for 10,000 numbers; thus, as many as 10,000 items can be recorded on each term card.

Mrs. Wood is using this system with success at her own operation, the Joseph Drexel Institute, and the Copeland-Audelot at the Henry Francis DuPont Winterthur museum. With the help of that institution, Drexel Institute and the Copeland-Audelot Foundation, she explored the possibilities of the system in collections at the Library Company of Philadelphia (books); the Delaware state archives (governmental archives); the New York Historical Society (miscellaneous personal manuscripts); Eleutherian Mills historical library (family papers); Archives of American Art (large quantities of microfilmed papers); Virginia colonial records project (microfilmed official records); the Lewis-Walpole collection of eighteenth century English prints; Smithsonian Institution (silver objects); Winterthur museum (furniture); and finally, an amalgamation of all nine samples into a union index.

Mrs. Wood reported her conclusions to a conclave held in Philadelphia in the spring of 1966. As one of the participants at that meeting, this reviewer came away with the opinion that this system probably was not suited to large collections of materials. Mrs. Wood, in her published report, tends to agree. Had her samples, which were limited to relatively small numbers of items in each of the nine institutions, been larger, it might have been possible to show that these fears were unfounded.

Be that as it may, it appears that Mrs. Wood has proved that the optic-coincidence system of indexing materials in a relatively

small collection will work economically and efficiently. Indeed, the curator of silver at the Smithsonian was enthusiastic over the possibilities of the system, providing her with a useful means of categorizing her materials. In short, for certain types of collections, this system may be one answer for the mechanical means of information retrieval.—*Marcus A. McCorison, American Antiquarian Society.*

Interlibrary Request and Loan Transactions Among Medical Libraries of the Greater New York Area. By Lee Ash and Vernon R. Bruette. New York: The Survey of Medical Library Resources of Greater New York, 1966. 199p. \$5. (66-26014).

Interlibrary loans are big business. This survey provides badly needed facts and suggests trends. While some of the findings are hardly unexpected, there are a few surprises.

The survey was set up in 1963 by funds from the Health Research Council of the City of New York. Gertrude Annan served as principal investigator with Jacqueline Felter and Erich Meyerhoff as co-investigators. The Medical Library Center of New York supplied office space and equipment. The original broad charge to the surveyors was soon narrowed to concentrate on interlibrary loans.

The surveyors pragmatically decided to use all of New York state and the area from Groton, Connecticut, through northern New Jersey for loans and requests. In addition, loans made to the survey libraries from the College of Physicians of Philadelphia and the National Library of Medicine were included. Questionnaires were sent to 441 libraries, 278 returned completed reports, and 224 agreed to take part in the survey. Of the 217 libraries which remained in the program for the full year, seventy-nine provided the bulk of the material.

The data used, which included requests for original materials and for photoreproductions, amounted to 99,452 transactions (27,825 requests by the survey libraries, and 71,627 requests to the survey libraries).

Of the serial requests made by the survey libraries 42.1 per cent were made by nineteen commercial concerns. The requests received by the survey libraries showed that

50.1 per cent came from the commercial concerns (mostly pharmaceutical houses). The National Library of Medicine received 14.5 per cent of all serial requests by the survey libraries. Some 9.6 per cent of the total requests went unfilled.

One of the biggest surprises for the surveyors was that almost 18 per cent of the requests by the survey libraries were made outside the survey area. This has some important implications for regional planning.

Tables break down the transactions by borrower, lender, and type, date, language, and subject of publication. The source records have been kept at the Center and are available for further study. The surveyors hope to publish elsewhere more detailed tables showing rank orders and numbers of requests and loans for the frequently-used journals.

In addition to drawing attention to the need for detailed cost studies (to include both direct and indirect elements), the surveyors conclude by emphasizing that the burden on the larger libraries must be relieved, that these libraries should "supplement" not "supply." They also stress the importance of on-the-spot service in the small libraries.

This is a census of a region and not a sample that could validly be extended over the country. It is a valuable report that should have a profound effect in the New York region and could have an effect nationally if other groups pick up the challenge and make comparable studies.—*William K. Beatty, Northwestern University.*

Books in America's Past. Essays Honoring Rudolph H. Gjelsness. Ed. by David Kaser. (Published for the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia.) Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, c.1966. x 279p. \$8.75.

When Rudolph H. Gjelsness retired in 1965, he had served the profession of librarianship for more than forty-five years, the last twenty-five years as chairman of the department of library science at the University of Michigan. This tastefully designed volume was published as a token of respect for Gjelsness' long, distinguished, and fruitful career as librarian, library educator, and scholar.

The volume contains thirteen contribu-