

Book Reviews

Conservation of Library Materials: A Manual and Bibliography on the Care, Repair and Restoration of Library Materials. By George Daniel Martin Cunha. Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1967. x, 405p., appendixes, bibliography, index, illustrations. \$10.00 (67-12063).

Since the pioneering publication in 1931 of Lydenberg and Archer's slender *The Care and Repair of Books*, there has been only one other monograph in English on scientific book conservation. No profession in its infancy has a significant body of literature, but the emerging profession of book conservation is suffering prolonged growing pains. This is partly due to the fact that the profession's principal parent, bookbinding, does not have an adequate technical literature in English, although its other parent, the conservation of museum objects, is producing highly competent writing. Most of the relevant literature is scattered in books and journals of such diverse fields as bookbinding, conservation of art objects, the sciences, papermaking, and archives administration. Thus it is difficult for the curator or bookbinder to find all of the information that he needs, and it is often not in very useful form.

The Conservation of Library Materials then is the most important monograph on the subject published in English thus far. Captain Cunha, a retired naval officer, now Conservator of the Boston Athenaeum, has attempted to synthesize or provide access to most of the knowledge which is necessary for workers in the field. Despite the use of the term "manual" in the subtitle, however, this book is primarily a literature survey. There are no detailed instructions for any operation; the techniques of bookbinding and binding restoration, for example, are treated in four pages. Approximately two-fifths of the book are text; one-fifth is appendixes, and two-fifths are bibliography.

The text is a mixed bag of useful information, balanced surveys, and sound evaluations, on the one hand, with unclear and disorganized writing, fuzzy thinking, and

misinformation on the other. For example, Captain Cunha usefully mentions a number of processes for deacidification or lamination rather than just the Barrow processes which tend to be known to the exclusion of others. However, he perpetuates through numerous references to "good rag" and "bad wood pulp" papers the myth that rag paper is necessarily good and wood pulp paper is necessarily bad. In fact, he states that "even the better grades of chemically treated wood pulp paper can be expected to last only a decade or two," while discussing in other places in the book the hundreds-of-years life expectancy of the "permanent/durable" wood pulp papers.

Cunha recognizes the need of librarians and bookbinders to know more about the technology and terminology of the materials with which they deal. However, such misleading explanations as those which confuse book and text, or coated and filled papers, or claim that the plastic base of stamping foil assists the adhesion of the gold, or that potassium lactate neutralizes acid in leather, only worsen the situation.

The book contains scattered warnings about toxicity and explosion danger of chemicals, although unfortunately a section of the text dealing with precautions which is listed in the table of contents does not exist. It is a matter of the gravest importance to state that carbon disulfide must be used with caution while, in the same context, giving no precautions for the use of the highly explosive ethylene oxide gas, or to recommend the very toxic carbon tetrachloride-ethylene dichloride mixture without offering any *caveats*, or to point only to the "objectionable odor" of such hazardous solvents as carbon tetrachloride or benzene.

The appendixes are also of mixed value. The list of research centers and professional organizations, for example, is useful both for its specific citations and in giving an impression of the extent of such organizations, but the Technical Association of the Pulp and Paper Industry is in New York City, not Appleton, Wisconsin. In Appendix E the formula for potassium lactate

solution calls for over ten times the correct amount of paranitrophenol; it is little wonder that Cunha has trouble with staining, as he mentions earlier. On the basis of this the reviewer would hesitate to use any of these formulae without checking them in their source, but the sources are not given. The glossary which comprises Appendix I is reprinted from ALA's 1951 *Library Binding Manual* and has little to do with conservation.

The organization of the bibliography is almost incomprehensible; it purports to follow the chapter arrangement of the text, but does not exactly do so. For a bibliography with seventy-eight headings and approximately two thousand entries, an index of authors would be useful, and a table of contents is indispensable. Within the classification scheme, catalogs of exhibitions of bindings are listed under "History—General," "History—Bindings" and "Repair and Restoration—Binding—General." An article on a device for testing library bindings is listed under "Material—General" and "Conservation—General," but not under "Binding—General" or "Library Binding."

The principles of selection are difficult to deduce. Haslam's virtually worthless pamphlet on cleaning books and prints is listed twice (once anonymously), but I could not find the *TAPPI Standards* which includes widely cited procedures for the testing of paper. Storm and Peckham's useful *Introduction to Book Collecting* is listed, but *Glaister's Encyclopedia of the Book* is not. One of the most puzzling omissions is Herbst's supplement to Mejer's major bibliography on bookbinding.

The bibliography (as well as references in the text) is a veritable jungle of inconsistencies, misconstructions, and obscurities. Titles in foreign languages are sometimes but not always given in English; accents are used or ignored at random; titles of journals are cited in widely varying form. Some entries are annotated, most are not. Joannis Guigard and Jacques Guignard both emerge as J. Guigard. Warren Jenney becomes Jenney Warren. Keyes D. Metcalf is cited as D. M. Keyes. Or take Mr. Smith. He is cited four times, as Hermann Smith, Herman Smith, L. Herman Smith (correctly!), and as Herman L. Smith. His article

is cited once in the bibliography without his name at all.

There are a number of cases of the same items being listed twice under different main entries. For example, the catalogue of the 1957 Baltimore bookbinding exhibition is listed in the same section of the bibliography under both its title and the name of its (unstated) compiler. (The publication date in one entry is given as 1950.)

The Conservation of Library Materials, then, no matter how inaccurately, obscurely, or indirectly, will provide access to virtually all knowledge on book conservation in the Western world. It is unfortunate that so much patience will be required of the reader to find the information that he wants, and that there is so much misinformation in the text and appendixes, and cited in the bibliography. That such a key to the field as this has been so desperately needed cannot, however, absolve the publisher from blame for such an incredibly bad job of editing, if indeed the manuscript was edited at all. It is particularly distressing that the "publisher to the library profession" is responsible for so totally careless an example of publishing.—Paul N. Banks—*The Newberry Library*.

Developing a Computer-Based Information System. By R. E. Rosone *et al.* New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1967. 384p. \$14.95 (67-21331).

The term "information system" is an elusive one since it encompasses such a broad range of specific kinds of systems. The techniques, methodology, and philosophy of system design are in principle applicable to all of them. However, there are differences in detail which result from the need to focus attention on the problems of particular importance in a specific type of system. Since any author attempting to present methods for system design must use realistic examples to illustrate them, his book will show an emphasis on the problems significant in those examples.

Such is the case with this very useful introduction to techniques for development of information systems. The examples chosen are generally representative of "management" information systems, but par-