

Recent Publications

BOOK REVIEWS

Library Lighting. Keyes D. Metcalf. Washington, D.C.: Association of Research Libraries, 1970. 99p. \$2.00.

ARL's difficulty in this project was in working with librarians, since there are not more than three or four who have an intelligent comprehension of lighting, and none of them sat on Keyes Metcalf's advisory committee. The result is the calling to the bar for questioning a group of architects, engineers, and planning consultants, half of whom habitually perpetuate bad lighting on their clients. While the current fashion is to hail the preeminent importance of quality in lighting, a large part of this group either do not believe what they say, or (more likely) do not know what quality is or how to attain it in illumination.

No one in librarianship has searched longer or more assiduously for answers to good lighting than Keyes Metcalf, and ultimately, no one is more baffled by the whole question. There is a kind of quiet desperation in the methodology of this study, which poses questions to fifty-two architects, engineers, planning consultants, interior designers, physicists, physicians, psychologists, fiscal officers, plant maintenance officers, and research scholars, as if in hope that a dragnet thrown out to sweep in all possible information would make a definitive statement emerge. Once the answers were gathered, no one knew what to do with them, so a man disassociated with the project was asked to edit them. The questions, answers, and Keyes' comments on them form the bulk of this study. This procedure has resulted in the same four-line text confronting itself as two different answers on opposing pages 44 and 45, and a total answer preserved for posterity which reads, "Perhaps."

The questions posed the consultants are too multiple, asking too many different and unrelated things in the same breath, and

are not skillfully worded to elicit clear, pinpointed answers. The answers, which range far beyond the repliers' expertise, contain sheerly ignorant and appalling misinformation (not edited out), and the comments are summaries rather than demanding critical analyses. In this kind of a forum it is impossible just to stand aside and let everything go; all must be weighed, and a great part of the responses should not have been printed. This leaves us with a great deal of very bad advice about lighting undifferentiated from the valid information that is presented.

Keyes' introduction, conclusions, and recommendations contain some useful information, especially about lighting costs, a subject on which he is preeminent. His long-held position in favor of low intensity, which was mitigated in his book on academic library planning, is back in the guise of advocating variations in intensity for the library building. If we have high intensity for defective vision and library work areas, 70-80 percent of the reading areas can stay at 30-35 footcandles, which to me means "back to the cave."

Some valid points emerge throughout the study that are worth emphasizing. (1) It is important to build mock-ups. (2) The high intensities urged by power companies are sheer fraud. (3) Polarized light is primarily useful when paper is flat, not the characteristic position of material being read. (4) Few electrical engineers have sufficient knowledge of performance criteria. (5) The program should state lighting requirements for each area in terms of intensity, quality, and atmosphere desired.

Useful comments on the deteriorating effects of light on materials by a museum conservationist are on p.36-37, and there is a good bibliography, but, on the whole, this is an extremely confusing study for anyone without an outstanding knowledge of lighting.—*Ellsworth Mason, Hofstra University.*