BOOK REVIEWS


That "no library is an island" is forcefully brought to everyone's attention by The Metropolitan Library. While the emphasis of this publication is on the social, political, and economic problems of the large library located in the major urban centers of the United States, the effect of the suburban library, school libraries, community college libraries, and college and university libraries on the urban library make this volume broader in scope than the title would indicate.

The volume is divided into four parts: I—Introduction, II—The Function of the Public Library, III—The Public Library in the Metropolis, and IV—Critical Issues. The eighteen chapters are authored by five librarians and twelve specialists in other disciplines. (Ms. Molz presents two chapters.) In addition to Ms. Molz, such stalwarts in the library field as Dr. Jesse Shera, Dr. Lowell Martin, Mr. Lester L. Stoffel and the British librarian D. J. Foskett present challenging documents. Contributors of other chapters include urban planners, publishers, and professors in sociology, journalism, speech communications, political science and an administrator in the U.S. Department of Labor. Eight of the chapters have appeared in other versions in other publications. Included in the eight, five appeared in The Public Library and the City (ed. R. W. Conant, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1965). Parts of one chapter—that written by Dr. Conant—have appeared in at least five other publications.

In spite of the reprinting of updated articles, the volume is a valuable contribution not only to librarians but also to all those people—legislators, library board members, and state, county, and municipal officials—who must make decisions concerning the future of the large library in a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area. Particularly significant are the chapters by Dr. Shera ("The Public Library in Perspective"), Dr. Martin ("The Role and Structure of the Metropolitan Library"), Dan Lacy ("The Dissemination of Print"), and Claire K. Lipsman ("Public Library Service to the Urban Disadvantaged"). Ms. Lipsman reports a study of more than 3,000 individuals in fifteen cities, all residents of low-income urban areas living within half a mile of a branch library. The findings of this study are highly significant to any librarian planning or operating a program for disadvantaged users or nonusers. Of particular importance is the model presented for evaluating the cost-effectiveness of such programs. This article is a summary of the book, The Disadvantaged and Library Effectiveness by Claire K. Lipsman (Chicago: ALA, 1972).

To have authorities from other disciplines examine the large public library brings insight and suggestions vital to the advancement of the urban library. Robert H. Salisbury focuses attention on "Trends in Urban Politics and Government" while William H. Hellmuth examines "Trends in Urban Fiscal Policies." Both chapters show the political and financial changes which have occurred in the last two decades, their effect on urban libraries, and identified future problems.

One cannot help wondering how this book would have been written in late 1973. Almost every author not only recognizes the importance of federal funding but also anticipates an increase in federal as well as state financial support. With the change of federal funding from categorical appropriations to revenue sharing, and with most states refusing to pick up the cost of federally funded programs, the conclusions and recommendations of most of the authors would have had to be different. The possibility of such a shift in federal funding was not even identified as a "critical issue."

The major thrust, however, of this volume is that public libraries are part of the social and political structure of society. They cannot exist in a vacuum. The metropolitan library must move into the main-
stream of the information and communica-
tion network locally, regionally, and nation-
ally. If it fails to overcome its isolation and
provincialism, it will disappear and will be
replaced by more viable and dynamic institu-
tions. That thrust is achieved.—John T.
Eastlick, Graduate School of Librarianship,
University of Denver, Colorado.

Wynkoop, Sally. Subject Guide to Gov-
ernment Reference Books. Littleton,
Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1972. $11.50.

Wynkoop, Sally. Government Reference
Books, 70/71. Littleton, Colo.: Libraries
Unlimited, 1972. $8.50.

The introduction states that Subject
Guide to Government Reference Books is
essentially a general orientation guide to
the most important reference books pub-
lished by the Government Printing Office
and government agencies. Ms. Wynkoop
has done an admirable job in choosing, list-
ing, and annotating some 1,016 books and
serials with reference value. The resulting
compilation is a good introduction for the
occasional user and provides an insight into
the variety and scope of subjects covered
in official publications.

The very qualities which go into making
a good orientation guide limit the useful-
ness of such a guide for reference and re-
search purposes. Obviously, the high degree
of selectivity necessary to provide coverage
for many subjects prevents comprehensive
coverage of any particular subject. In or-
der to list the most important government
reference books, many of the most common
also had to be included. The practicing ref-
erence or document librarian hardly needs
another description of the Statistical Ab-
stract or the Yearbook of Agriculture.

Each entry gives all essential bibli-
ographic information and a descriptive anno-
tation. The annotations are well done, par-
ticularly in giving data about previous edi-
tions, related volumes, etc. On the whole,
the information is accurate, with a few mi-
nor errors which really do not affect the
usability of the information.

The index in the back of the book is also
gearied for general purposes. It is made up
of the subjects which appear in the table
of contents, a title entry for each book or
series included, and personal authors when
mentioned. The use of several descriptors
for each entry would have done much to
increase the value of the guide for refer-
ence purposes.

Government Reference Books 70/71 is
the second in a biennial series which forms
a record of the most important reference
books published by the government during
1970 and 1971. Unlike the Subject Guide
this listing is intended to be comprehensive.
The format is essentially the same as in the
Subject Guide and the 68/69 edition with
the books arranged by subject. The ar-
rangement of the subject headings has been
somewhat changed, and while the new ar-
rangement is useful in this volume, it is dis-
concerting if the three publications are
being used as a set.

A great deal of repetition of titles is in-
cluded in the one thousand-plus entries in
this edition. In my opinion this is detrimen-
tal rather than helpful. In a biennial survey
it is wasteful at best to include two entries
for books published annually, four entries
for books published semiannually, and in
some cases five and six entries for the same
title. There are also forty separate entries
and annotations for Army Area Handbooks,
each entry repeating essentially the same
information with slight variations from
country to country. One entry describing the
series, plus a list of those handbooks pub-
lished in 1970 and 1971 would have been
sufficient.

For people having limited contact with
documents, these biennial compilations will
be a reminder of the on-going and tremen-
dously worthwhile contribution of the gov-
ernment in the field of reference materials.
For purposes of research, or as a helpful aid
to documents librarians, this series has the
same drawbacks as does the Subject Guide
—an unsophisticated index, general rather
than in-depth coverage, and a great deal
of space devoted to what every documents
librarian should know already or be able
to find easily.—Joyce Ball, Head, Refer-
ence Department, University of Nevada,
Reno.

Weihs, Jean Riddle; Lewis, Shirley; and
Macdonald, Janet. Nonbook Materials,
the Organization of Integrated Collec-
tions. Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Library