

# Recent Publications

## BOOK REVIEWS

- ✓ Conant, Ralph W. and Molz, Kathleen, eds. *The Metropolitan Library*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1972. \$10.00.

That "no library is an island" is forcibly 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 communication network locally, regionally, and nationally. If it fails to overcome its isolation and provincialism, it will disappear and will be replaced by more viable and dynamic institutions. That thrust is achieved.—*John T. Eastlick, Graduate School of Librarianship, University of Denver, Colorado.*

✓ Wynkoop, Sally. **Subject Guide to Government 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 published by the Government Printing Office and government agencies. Ms. Wynkoop has done an admirable job in choosing, listing, 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 usefulness of such a guide for reference and research purposes. Obviously, the high degree of selectivity necessary to provide coverage for many subjects prevents comprehensive coverage of any particular subject. In order to list the most important government reference books, many of the most common also had to be included. The practicing reference or document librarian hardly needs another description of the *Statistical Abstract* or the *Yearbook of Agriculture*.

Each entry gives all essential bibliographic information and a descriptive annotation. The annotations are well done, particularly in giving data about previous editions, related volumes, etc. On the whole, the information is accurate, with a few minor errors which really do not affect the usability of the information.

The index in the back of the book is also geared 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 reference 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 arrangement of the subject headings has been somewhat changed, and while the new arrangement is useful in this volume, it is disconcerting if the three publications are being used as a set.

A great deal of repetition of titles is included in the one thousand-plus entries in this edition. In my opinion this is detrimental 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 published 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 tremendously worthwhile contribution of the government 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, Reference Department, University of Nevada, Reno.*

✓ Weihs, Jean Riddle; Lewis, Shirley; and Macdonald, Janet. **Nonbook Materials, the Organization of Integrated Collections.** Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Library Association, 1973. 107 p. \$6.50.