

Borchardt, D. H., and Horacek, J. I. *Librarianship in Australia, New Zealand and Oceania: A Brief Survey*. Potts Point, NSW, Australia: Pergamon Press (Australia), 1975. 80p. \$6.50. ISBN 0-08-019920-8. ISBN 0-08-019752-3 paper.

The impetus for this slender monograph surveying librarianship in the South Pacific was provided by a commission soliciting a chapter for a comparative study of librarianship throughout the world.

Preceding the text are simple, uncluttered maps of Australia and New Zealand. On them are marked, by a variety of dots, population densities of five to twenty thousand and twenty to one hundred thousand plus. Cities with populations in excess of one hundred thousand are listed down the side of the maps. Those unfamiliar with these countries will need to have an atlas on hand in order to identify the locations of the cities. The end papers are maps illustrating the area of the Pacific Ocean under discussion.

The book opens with a rudimentary account of the history and geography of this diverse region, which lays the foundation for the reader. From there it moves into an overview of the field. Types of libraries are discussed along with library education, professional status, including salary structures, and the literature. Several interesting tables of public and university library statistics for Australia and New Zealand are included in the chapter on "Types of Libraries." In an epilogue the authors identify the future course of librarianship down under and enumerate ways in which this can be achieved. The compactness and continuity found elsewhere in the book are somewhat lacking in the final chapter on "Bibliography and the Literature of Librarianship."

At the outset the authors express hope that this brief survey will serve as a text for library school students who wish to gain insight into the function of librarianship in their society—a topic, by and large, neglected by library schools. The book also will be invaluable to librarians who are interested in working in this part of the world. Concise, factual, and interestingly written, it presents, in a nutshell, the growth and current status of librarianship in the South Pacific.—*Judith P. Cannan, Deputy Chief Instructor, Cataloging In-*

struction Office, Processing Department, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Chen, Ching-chih. *Biomedical, Scientific & Technical Book Reviewing*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1976. 186p. \$8.00. LC 76-20480. ISBN 0-8108-0939-7.

The basic premise undergirding the various studies described in this book is about as controversial as apple pie and motherhood. Few science librarians would deny the repeated assertions that book reviews are a valuable means of keeping abreast of current research and of evaluating and selecting new acquisitions. Nor is the identification of those scientific journals which best supply reliable, timely reviews too difficult, although precise information on the adequacy of various aspects of that coverage is more difficult to locate.

The interesting data supplied in this collection of quantitative surveys of scientific review sources are from counts made in the early 1970s from journals held by the Countway Library of Medicine at Harvard and the science and engineering libraries at M.I.T. Insight on such variables as extent of coverage, time lag, duplication patterns, length of review, subject orientation, and the relative emphasis on U.S. and British imprints is furnished in successive chapters for general biomedical books, books on clinical medicine, general scientific books, and publications in the special disciplines of mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, geology, and engineering. An additional chapter gives supplementary data on major publishers in each of the areas surveyed.

There is much solid information here, although most of it is fragmented by the format, which not only confines the analysis of each study to a separate section but follows no uniform pattern in assessing the recurrent variables. These difficulties stem partly from a constant slight shift of parameters for each data base. Most chapters report both a pilot study and an update study made some two or three years later. Frequently a periodical which met the criteria for one study proved to be insignificant for the companion study. Some titles too useful to be ignored were not held in the two base collections. For different reasons the spans of data collection varied from six months

to one year. Still the author concludes that "the overall reviewing pattern in all disciplines has seemed to remain relatively constant over the past couple of decades" (p.123). We can possibly infer that the minor inconsistencies in data gathering did not materially affect the results.

More useful and impressive than a rigid pattern of data gathering would have been a technique developed for easy, direct comparison of the analogous findings from each study with the other and with a composite profile. In spite of the numerous tables within the text, plus appendixes at the close, readers are forced to search out and compare for themselves (no easy task in view of the constantly changing presentations of both text and tables).

The final chapter of general conclusions does give a composite time-lag table, although none of the other summaries of findings is similarly documented. This volume adds evidence to the impressions of many observers that, while the burden of book reviewing is carried by a comparatively small percentage of sci-tech journals, reliable book reviews for most significant general biomedical and general science books do appear in a year or less, frequently in more than one source. The situation in special disciplines, we are told, is less reliable, with astronomy and engineering titles being the most poorly reviewed.—*Jeanne Osborn, School of Library Science, The University of Iowa.*

Computer-Readable Bibliographic Data Bases: A Directory and Data Sourcebook.

Compiled and edited by Martha E. Williams and Sandra H. Rouse, Information Retrieval Research Laboratory, Coordinated Science Laboratory, University of Illinois. Washington, D.C.: American Society for Information Science, 1976—Loose-leaf. \$68.00 per year. LC 76-46249. ISBN 0-87715-114-8.

The rapid integration and growth of on-line bibliographic services in all types of libraries during the past four years has demanded a single reference source of the available machine-readable data bases. Librarians and end users alike have required an up-to-date compilation of the publicly available data bases outlining their subject scope, format, acronym, full name, produc-

er, and accessibility. This ambitious and urgently needed task has been accomplished by Martha E. Williams and Sandra H. Rouse in their massive work, *Computer-Readable Bibliographic Data Bases: A Directory and Data Sourcebook*. Compared with the 1973 ASIS publication, *Survey of Commercially Available Computer-Readable Bibliographic Data Bases*, which provided information on eighty-one data bases, the new directory expands coverage to 301 data bases and includes more pertinent details about the files.

Anticipating the dynamic nature of data bases which frequently change their name, format, ownership, or availability on various systems, the directory appears in a loose-leaf binder with update pages being promised at six-month intervals. Ranging from ABIPC (the *Abstract Bulletin of the Institute of Paper Chemistry*) to *Zoological Record*, the data base outlines follow a consistent format, the definition and methodology of which are well described in the "Introduction." Approximately 58 percent of the data bases are produced by U.S. organizations and about 41 percent by foreign organizations. Although some of the minimal data base descriptions are not fully detailed, the majority of the file entries include a great deal of information: acronym and complete name, issuance, correspondence with printed source, producer, distributor and/or generator, subject matter and scope, indexing, tape specifications, data base services, and user aids if offered by the producer. Of particular assistance is the name, address, and telephone number of the person to contact for further information about the data base. Included in the data base services category are the centers which process the file in either the on-line or batch mode; deliberately excluded are centers which provide in-house service only or brokers which provide search services by remotely accessing other computer facilities. The directory is augmented by four indexes—broad subject categories, data base name, producer, and processor.

In order to retain its usefulness, rigorous updating will be necessary. Having been published in October 1976 before the January 1977 availability of the Bibliographic Retrieval Services, Inc., BRS system and before the actual loading of several pre-