

Benjamin, Curtis G. *A Candid Critique of Book Publishings*. New York: Bowker, 1977. 187p. \$15.00. LC 77-21286. ISBN 0-8352-1033-2.

A longtime spokesman for the publishing industry, Curtis G. Benjamin is former president of McGraw-Hill, member of many trade and government committees, and twice chairman of the Book Industry Joint Committee on Copyright. Still active in retirement, he serves as consultant to the Association of American Publishers on Education for Publishing and he is still speaking for and to the industry to which he has devoted a lifetime of energy.

A Candid Critique of Book Publishing contains the ideas and opinions that he has voiced over the years, now brought together, updated, and shaped into a cohesive statement of concern for the many aspects of publishing that seem to need either clarification or improvement. In clear, colorful, and vigorous prose, Benjamin points out the weaknesses of the industry while affirming his devotion to it and his conviction that those who publish books will continue to perform an important intellectual and commercial function in our society.

Composed of twenty short chapters, *A Candid Critique* begins, logically, with a definition of book publishing and goes on to a discussion of its "siren attractions" with Benjamin's sharp condemnation for the industry's willingness to use a perennial oversupply of job seekers as an excuse for a low pay scale and a tolerance of the inefficiency created by high personnel turnover. Each chapter concerns a specific topic, and, while one subject may not necessarily lead directly into the next, there is an overall pattern that generally satisfies the reader.

The chapters on author-publisher relationships follow naturally the discussion of publishing as a profession. Those chapters that deal with the economics of publishing, such as marketing, product promotion, underpricing, overprinting, and mergers, are grouped together as are those concerned with foreign markets, multinational publishing, and publishing in needy countries. The problem of copyright as the "key to survival" is included, of course, as an important issue still unresolved in many ways.

Each topic is handled succinctly and di-

rectly, for Benjamin has the ability to impart a lot of background information in a few words as he selects what is essential to highlight the points he wants to make. The language is clear. The author's approach is direct, sometimes conversational. His quotations are appropriate.

Librarians will see themselves here through a publisher's eyes. On the one hand, they are praised as in their activities to promote reading and books by National Library Week, while publishers' neglect of such product promotion is "something that should long ago have the attention of an industrial psychiatrist." On the other hand, on the issue of copyright, librarians are chastised for "their overriding concern for their own convenience and for the facility of service to their patrons." More important, though, than any emotional reaction to praise or rebuke after reading this book will be librarians' enlarged perspective of the book publishing industry.

To be sure, some issues are oversimplified, but an annotated bibliography is provided for those who would read more deeply about particular topics. Also, this reviewer would have enjoyed a few more pages on some subjects omitted, such as the decline in the quality of books produced, publishers' relationships with jobbers, the future of mixed-media formats, etc., for Benjamin's opinions are always interesting and his experience in publishing is a rich source to explore. Ostensibly written for book publishers, *A Candid Critique of Book Publishing* should have a much wider readership.—Mary E. Thatcher, University of Connecticut, Storrs.

Foskett, A. C. *The Subject Approach to Information*. 3d ed. London: Clive Bingley; Hamden, Conn.: Linnet Books, 1977. 476p. \$12. ISBN 0-85157-238-3 Bingley; 0-208-01546-9 Linnet.

"Perhaps librarians could solve some of the problems of recall and relevance by encouraging some kind of literary contraception" (p.19). If the reader believes Foskett's figure of speech extreme, compare the out-raging "All language is fascist" of Roland Barthes or George Steiner's "Often a language will filter out from the field of recog-

dition even more information than it includes in that field."

But Foskett's measured good humor in the 3d edition of his *The Subject Approach to Information* (SAI) is only occasional in requiring such foils. The "lobsterbacks" really are leading the way in information retrieval, and Foskett's recapitulant style humanizes these achievements with the aplomb of a *Times* letters-to-the-editor contributor.

Quite the weakest portion of both editions (2d and 3d) of Foskett's work is epistemology. The indefatigable scholar, at once urbane and donnish, betrays rampant idealism. What would Foskett make of Paul Weiss' assertion: "Applied with control and knowledge, classification takes the form of a disciplined discovery" (*Philosophy in Process*, v.7)? When this reviewer observes the overweening faith and bias Foskett exhibits in Austin's PRECIS quincunx, he concludes that Foskett would have the generosity to agree with Weiss. Are all classifiers Platonists? Hegelians?

And yet how useful for classroom use this work must be. The reviewer has been twenty-plus years out of cataloging and classification tuition (with twenty years' indexing), but its value as an introductory or intermediate survey text he rates as quite high. Some of the tabular exemplars are either dead wrong or typos continued intact from the 2nd edition, e.g., the 3d edition's treatment on page 266 of "Peek-a-boo 383+" index entry includes a modification line not in 3d edition index and without citation.

There is an observable British flavor to Mr. Foskett's prose: Are we to suppose the phrase "issue systems" on page 274 intends "circulation systems"? It does appear that photographic copy reproduction should be employed for examples of classification schedules for the 4th edition of SAI. The 3d edition is a genial introduction, a secondary reference source, and contains excellent and timely bibliographies.—Richard B. O'Keeffe, George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia.

Bolté, Charles G. *Libraries and the Arts and Humanities*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Gaylord Professional Publications, Gaylord Bros., Inc., 1977. 239p. \$12.50. LC 77-12926.

ISBN 0-915794-13-6.

This book grew out of a conference, "Developing Collaboration between Libraries and Other Humanities Agencies," sponsored in early 1977 by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The intent of the book is to encourage librarians to become familiar with and to take advantage of federal and state programs supporting the arts and humanities.

Following a brief summation of the concern the federal government showed for the arts and humanities prior to the 1960s, the author traces the main features and legislative intent behind the bill that established the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. The contrasting organizational structures of each endowment are described, as well as the state councils that each endowment directly or indirectly sponsors.

Responses to questionnaires sent by the author to each state arts and state humanities council are randomly quoted. These replies briefly outline state and local arts and humanities projects that involved librar-

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