

and practicing librarian or information specialist.—Audrey N. Grosch, *University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.*

Dewey, Melvil. *Melvil Dewey: His Enduring Presence in Librarianship.* Edited by Sarah K. Vann. The Heritage of Librarianship Series, no.4. Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1978. 278p. \$17.50 U.S. and Canada; \$21 elsewhere. LC 77-21852. ISBN 0-87287-134-7.

Here is another worthwhile contribution to a growing body of works by and about the bearer of the best-known name in American library history. From Grosvenor Dawe's official eulogy, published under the Lake Placid Club imprint the year after Melvil Dewey's death, to this latest compilation, biographers have given as much attention to revealing the man through his writings as through their own narratives. Small wonder, for while the bulk of Dewey's publication during his lifetime is substantial, that of his unpublished correspondence, notes, and diaries is even greater and harder to access because of its dispersion and difficult shorthand.

The editors of this work, and of the series to which it belongs, disclaim having produced the definitive study "so badly needed." Yet Sarah Vann researched an impressive list of sources to give us a concise biography, a useful selection from Dewey's library writings, and a nearly definitive chronological bibliography. She mentions, but does not attempt to document, such other enthusiasms as simplified spelling, the metric system, and the Lake Placid Club.

This biobibliography adds nothing startling to our general acquaintance with a nineteenth-century titan. Ardent, industrious, high-principled, optimistic, hyperactive, and opinionated, Dewey deliberately chose librarianship as his primary sphere of action. He was not merely a joiner but also a founder of lyceums, societies, and clubs. He planned, organized, and administered at every opportunity, attracting loyal supporters and antagonizing other strong-willed associates throughout his long career. He was more an activist than a contemplative scholar or researcher. His writings tend toward exhortation, bolstered by fairly absolutist pronouncements based on shrewd

practical observation. Yet through the familiar idiosyncrasies of his nature and his milieu emerges a picture of a genial, just, dedicated, and effective man.

Following a short but revealing biography in part I, part II, which forms the bulk of the volume, groups selected professional papers of Dewey into fourteen subtopics, each prefaced by a brief critical commentary. They cover his views on the American Library Association, women in librarianship, education for librarianship, library cooperation, cataloging and classification, the Library of Congress, public and academic libraries, and glances toward the future and the past. The bibliography in part III first identifies extant Dewey manuscript collections. It next cites in chronological order his editorial achievements and his library-related publications. Finally it gives a useful survey of works about the man. The book closes with a general index.

Few readers will proceed straight through this book from cover to cover. It is more a source for reference and browsing. Its chief impact will be to remind us how little in library theory and practice is new. Terminology and modes of expression alter, but the issues are perennial, resulting in solutions that frequently become cyclic. That is, the issues transcend our temporal solutions. They must be faced and "solved" by each new generation. Historical perspective becomes, then, not an excuse for skepticism or irresponsibility, but an opportunity to learn from the experience of the past. Melvil Dewey packed into his eighty years a great deal of observation and common sense that can inform and guide us today.—*Jeanne Osborn, The University of Iowa, Iowa City.*

**"Libraries and Society: Research and Thought."** Phyllis Dain and Margaret F. Stieg, issue editors. *Library Trends* 27:221-417 (Winter 1979). \$5. ISSN 0024-2594. (Available from: Univ. of Illinois Pr., Urbana, IL 61801.)

The need for librarians to study their relationship to society in these changing times is of prime importance. The library's role in our sociocultural milieu is dependent on varied circumstances, technological advances, changing human thought and behavior, to name but a few factors. This issue