

ing to raise a family, pay the greengrocer, and find some sort of continuing financial security.

The book primarily addresses two aspects of the writing profession: the difficulty of its achieving identity as a profession and the economic consequences of this difficulty. Walter Besant, on whose writings Bonham-Carter draws heavily, said of early efforts at organization by authors:

They began . . . with an impossible theory: that authorship is a profession as distinct as law or medicine; and that it is possible to unite its members, as those called to the Bar are united, into a guild or company governed by its own laws. At the most, authorship is a collection of professions. . . . There is one thing, and one thing only, for which those who write books and papers which are sold can possibly unite—viz., their material interests.

Within this economically oriented context, Bonham-Carter chronicles the long, frequently aimless, evolution from the period when authors, either as dependents of patrons or as frenzied hacks, producing and selling their writings like piecemeal work, were virtually without an identity, on to the breakthrough of the 1700s when novelists like Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett found a readership so wide that the publisher was obliged to recognize at least the successful author as an economic coequal, ending with what occupies a full half of the book, the years between the founding of the Society of Authors in 1884 and the passage of the Copyright Act of 1911.

The prodigally documented details of this latter half may, as much as anything, make the reader wish for a more even treatment throughout the book. Up until 1884, Bonham-Carter's coverage is, as he promises, selective—in terms both of authors mentioned and of the attention they receive. While the varying fortunes of his writers as they tried to deal with their publishers are well worth the reading, the effect is almost more like a series of annual reports than literary history. This makes the book less interesting and broadly useful than it might have been. *Authors by Profession* still has considerable value, however, and should not be ignored by the academic librarian.—Charles Helzer, *University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois*.

Bernier, Charles L., and Yerkey, A. Neil. *Cogent Communication: Overcoming Reading Overload*. Contributions in Librarianship and Information Science, number 26. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Pr., 1979. 280p. \$19.95. LC 78-73794. ISBN 0-313-20893-X.

In deciding to write about lack of cogency and communication and reading overload, the authors have chosen a topic of great interest to all of us who struggle to "keep up" in the face of mounting piles of unread journals and unchecked SDI printouts. The authors, and in particular the first author, also write from an impressive background in the management of library and information systems, particularly in the scientific and technical areas, and Bernier is writing on a topic on which he was expressed himself in print a number of times. It is with reluctance, therefore, that the reviewer is forced to report that the expectations raised by the title, the expertise of the author, and the cogent introduction are not fully met.

The book starts promisingly by convincingly introducing its premise—that people read and view, but do nothing appropriate about it, even if it is in their own interest to do so. It goes on to state the book's subject and purpose in admirably simple terms; that it is about reading and then doing something appropriate about what has been read.

It is perhaps inevitable that, having raised such high expectations in the reader, the authors are not really able to solve the problem they have so well presented. The first half of the book is devoted to the explanation and advocacy of terse communication, sometimes also expressed as terse organization, terse literature, and terse conclusions. It is a topic on which Bernier has written before, and he states his case with emotion and urgency—that communication could be made more useful and used if much of the excess verbiage were removed.

The authors are protagonists and not observers, and they present nothing less. From the advocacy of terse communication, which is defined as reduction to 1 percent of the original, the authors proceed to ultraterse, which is even less than 1 percent. They argue that present techniques of surrogation, including abstracts, indexes, and skipping, have all failed. It is an unavoid-

able observation that the exposition of the case for terse communication is itself anything but terse.

The second half of the book deals not with overlap but with cogency and examines motivations, psychological bases for communication, attitudes, beliefs, and the desire to persuade as the basis for cogency. The authors point out, quite correctly, that we are persuaded not only by the message but also by the source of the message.

This is in many ways an interesting book, but it is frustrating because no clear solution plans are proposed. We are left with general admonitions such as "the subject of message variables is complex, but we believe a careful study of these factors will pay dividends in increased cogency." Perhaps the authors point to the source of the difficulty in their introduction, by stating that the book itself is an example of the cultural lag that they identify as part of the difficulty, and that it could have been written thirty-five years ago. This reviewer fears that some form of it may be written again thirty-five years from now.

The work contains a useful appendix, references, and bibliography and appears competently researched. It is therefore somewhat surprising to find in it a number of unsupported and unattributed statements, introduced by "somebody has said" and "it has been said." The book makes interesting reading for those of us who worry about the problems in information transfer and reading overload, but it offers only general solutions to these pervasive concerns. Its reference value is therefore limited.—Herbert S. White, *Indiana University, Bloomington*.

**The Osler Library.** Montreal: McGill University, 1979. 64p. \$10 plus \$1 postage and handling. ISBN 0-7717-0046-6. (Order from: Osler Library, McGill University, 3655 Drummond St., Montreal, PQ H3G 1Y6.)

On the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary the Osler Library at McGill University has published a small but elegantly printed and handsomely illustrated book describing the library and giving its history.

Just as the Osler Library itself has been an inspiration to many librarians in the United States and Canada, so this book will

be something to study and try to emulate in the future.

Sir William Osler (1848–1919) had been connected with a number of medical schools, both as student and as teacher. He received his medical degree at McGill, taught there for some time, moved to the University of Pennsylvania, then to the new Johns Hopkins Medical School, and finally was chosen regius professor of medicine at Oxford University.

Always, however, McGill remained his first love, and when he died his wide collection of rare books in medicine was found to be bequeathed to that institution—but with the proviso that it should be cataloged before it was dispatched overseas. His nephew William W. Francis, his cousin Archibald Malloch, and R. H. Hill (with the shadowy figure of Leonard Mackall in the background) worked for about eight years on the *Bibliotheca Osleriana*, the catalog of almost 8,000 volumes that were finally in place in the new quarters erected for them at McGill in 1928. Together with the collection and its catalog came Francis as curator and honorary librarian, who stayed until his death some thirty years later and who in turn left his books and his name to a new wing of the library.

The *Bibliotheca Osleriana* is arranged as Osler saw the literature of medicine, in eight large groups: prima, secunda, litteraria, historica, biographica, bibliographia, incunabula, and manuscripts. Such an idiosyncratic classification is characteristic of Osler, who was interested in the problems of libraries and who had his own ideas about how things should be done. In many cases, however, the reasons for assigning works in one or another category were known only to Osler—though sometimes the annotations (many of which he wrote himself) explain what Osler thought of the work.

In any case, the original collection is kept in the order of the *Bibliotheca* in the present Osler Library, much as archives are kept in the order in which they are received in a library even today. To browse through the pages of the *Bibliotheca*, however, is to view the history of medicine and its cognate sciences through the eyes of one who intimately knew the importance and worth of each of the items and who could bring to