

Whitehall, T. *Personal Current Awareness Service: A Handbook of Techniques for Manual SDI*. British Library Research & Development Reports, No. 5502. London: British Library, 1979. 119p. £7. ISBN 0-905984-43-9. ISSN 0308-2385. (Available from: Publications, British Library, Research and Development Dept., Sheraton House, Great Chapel St., London W1V 4BH.)

T. Whitehall has presented a well-organized and detailed guide to the personal current awareness service that depends on the scanning of the accessions of a library in a particular subject area. The methods employed in this study are literature search and interviews conducted in academic, special, and public libraries.

The report begins with an introduction in which the value of current awareness service in general and selective dissemination of information (SDI) and its application in particular are considered. Components of an SDI service are also discussed. After examining the place of SDI among other current awareness techniques, promotion of an SDI service, and the setting up of an SDI service, the author analyzes a wide variety of approaches to manual SDI. The approaches to manual SDI were discovered, with librarians, subject specialists, and project workers functioning as scanners. The author does not ignore other current awareness techniques, including computerized SDI, which is discussed rather briefly. Profiling, scanning, and notification techniques are described in detail. Production system for SDI, quality control of SDI, and management of an SDI service are also considered.

At the end of the report are a bibliography and two appendixes, the first on the idea of a core literature and the second on the details of the investigation. The bibliography presented is not very extensive; however, by dividing the bibliography into five parts based on the subject matter the author has enhanced its utility. Researchers interested in manual SDI would find the second appendix of particular interest. The questionnaires presented in this appendix are pertinent as well as extensive.

The only fault with the report is that it ignores the question of cost. The author

wants to give greater attention to the "value" of a system than to its cost. Details on cost, however, would have enhanced the practical value of this guide.

Notwithstanding this obvious shortcoming, the report makes a significant contribution to the field of current awareness. While the report would be useful to the currently existing SDI systems, those contemplating to start manual SDI would find it especially useful.—*Priya Rai, Central Connecticut State College, New Britain.*

Grogan, Denis. *Practical Reference Work.*

Outlines of Modern Librarianship. London: Clive Bingley; New York: K. G. Saur, 1979. 144p. \$10. LC 79-41109. ISBN 0-85157-275-8.

This slim volume is precisely what the title indicates, a concise introduction to the practical aspects of "doing" reference. The author goes to great lengths in his preface to state the limitations of the work, and he does not pretend to offer the comprehensive discourse in theory or bibliography that is done better elsewhere. Specifically aimed at the student of reference, the book contains a tightly arranged and readable survey that includes references to many acknowledged authorities and the results of specific studies on a wide range of subjects. The original sources are adequately represented in chapter bibliographies as well as a brief general bibliography.

The author is liberal with examples. He illustrates the routine questions and circumstances a potential public service librarian is bound to confront. He obviously views librarianship as a humane profession and says so often. He dwells on personal attributes and responses to the varied needs of questioners. He attempts to provoke concern for the individual, and he reminds us of the things that should be obvious to service-oriented professionals—things such as attitude, approachability, and if not a smile, at least not a frown—things which are often forgotten among loftier concerns.

The author documents his materials well. He provides historical perspective in the development of service and integrates computer capabilities into the reference environment easily and naturally.

One basic argument is alluded to fre-