

Recent Publications

BOOK REVIEWS

Meckler, Alan Marshall. *Micropublishing: A History of Scholarly Micropublishing in America, 1938-1980.* Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1982. 179p. \$23.95. LC 81-6955. ISBN 0-313-23096-X.

Alan Meckler, the historian, works hand in hand with Alan Meckler, the publisher. In 1976 his firm, then called Micro-former Review, Inc., published Allen Veaner's *Studies in Micropublishing, 1853-1976*, an invaluable collection of documentary sources on the development of microphotography and micropublishing. Much of the story told in the mosaic of documents in Veaner's book may be read in a compact, summarized form in Meckler's. Meckler, however, adds new material: an informative chapter on university press experiments with micropublications and personal interviews with commercial micropublishing pioneers Eugene Power, Albert Boni, Samuel Freedman, and James Adler. Power published the first large reprint collection on microfilm; Boni developed an offset printing technique capable of printing microimages on card stock; Freedman discovered and exploited the money-making potential in filming newspapers. Adler went a giant step beyond mere reprinting. He provided previously unavailable, much-needed access to government information by creating an index combined with a microfiche edition of the documents he published. Meckler's history would have been more complete with the addition of details that both interviewer and interviewees did not mention, such as the practices adopted by early (and some later) microprinters to minimize their investments, and the way the usefulness of microprints was compro-

mised by exceeding the technical limits of the process in an effort to increase file density. Meckler's brief section on ultrafiche is factual as far as it goes; the reader does not learn, however, that commercial success eluded the technically brilliant *Encyclopaedia Britannica* micropublishing venture.

These omissions are typical. Throughout his work, Meckler appears diplomatic and tactful to a fault. He does not risk antagonizing either publishers or librarians by turning a critical eye to either their contributions to, or their treatment of, micropublishing, and as a result the historical picture he presents has certain gaps.

In unfolding the story of micropublishing, Meckler traced two major themes: user resistance and the failure of microforms to become the library panacea some ardent pioneers and promoters predicted. He agrees with numerous librarian writers in attributing "user resistance" to microforms to the need for a reading device, and to the alleged unsatisfactory quality of most microform readers. This is a popular misconception. When user resistance exists, it largely results from the misapplication of microforms (the user rejects microform material that does not address his needs) and, much more often, to bad design and management of library microform systems and facilities.

The reader of this book may speculate on the future of electronic publishing in libraries on the basis of prior experience with microforms. There are similarities: the word and the reader are separated by machinery that is often lacking in sound ergonomic design and that is delivering images of far lower quality than what is

available in even the poorer microform readers. Electronic publishing is a new form of publication that some believe will solve the "library problem" and replace publications in both microforms and traditional print. Can the history of micropublishing be helpful in assessing how likely this is to happen? In some ways it probably can. Electronic publishing will not replace traditional publishing, but it will succeed to the extent that it can find applications that will provide useful alternatives to print and microforms.—Francis F. Spreitzer, *University of Southern California*.

Maack, Mary Niles. *Libraries in Senegal; Continuity and Change in an Emerging Nation*. Chicago: American Library Assn., 1981, 280p. ISBN 0-8389-0321-5.

This is a short history of library, archive, and documentation development in Senegal, French West Africa. Senegal is particularly appropriate for historical attention: it has exerted a strong influence on its francophone neighbors, and its archives cover library activities from their early

nineteenth century beginnings. Maack explains the heavy and continuous dependence on France in education and library science. The book is written in a positive and temperate manner; its aim is to understand and explain, not to evaluate or criticize. Maack is a University of Minnesota Library School professor, and this is an adaptation and summary of her doctoral dissertation.

Chapters are arranged chronologically and by type of library. Lists of acronyms and abbreviations are provided as well as tables, illustrations, glossary, bibliography, appendix, index, and footnotes. According to Maack, Senegalese archives and special and academic libraries more or less have prospered in this period, but public and school libraries have not, a common picture in developing countries and one reflecting priorities in France, also.

This is a work to be proud of within its self-imposed limitations. The author's energy and thoroughness in collecting information through interviews and library search in Senegal, France, and the United States are noteworthy. The book is fair and comprehensive. It is well written, well titled, judicious and meticulous, and seems to be almost completely error-free. It is supported by extensive bilingual notes and citations. The work mentions for the anglophone reader the influence of French policies and practices on West African development and certain of their contrasts with the Anglo-American influence on other West African nations. The conclusions are logically developed and illuminating.

Most of this reviewer's questions relate to Maack's presentation policies. The book's focus is narrowly on libraries, while their cultural and economic setting are only lightly touched on, perhaps too lightly. Further, Maack nearly omits the Arabic and vernacular Islamic culture, which still dominates the common people's lives. So the book represents an outsider's or colonialist's view. Little space is given to comparisons of nearby nations. Nor is the question faced that French library policies may have been applied primarily in the best interests of France rather



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