

profession.—Linda E. Williamson, *University Library, University of Illinois at Chicago*.

Richardson, John V., *Government Information: Education and Research, 1928-1986*. Bibliographies and Indexes in Library and Information Science, no. 2. New York: Greenwood, 1987. 186p. \$35 (ISBN 0-313-25605-5). LC 86-27086.

The generalized title of this work is perhaps a bit misleading, since it is in fact a book containing the results of two distinctly different research efforts. Although both portions of this volume deal with graduate-level research pertaining to government publications, the two parts vary greatly in terms of utility and probable audience. The major portion of the book is a thorough, comprehensive annotated bibliography that should have broad appeal for both those in library schools and working librarians. The rest of the work is a quantitative and sociological analysis of graduate work in government publications that will seem somewhat esoteric to all but a miniscule few.

The valuable part of this book is the bibliography, which contains 317 entries and is a complete list of master's theses (or specialization papers) and doctoral dissertations written on any aspect of government information at library schools in the United States and Canada from 1928 through 1986. Each entry, in addition to bibliographic information and the name of the individual's faculty adviser, contains an abstract of one or more paragraphs. Regular readers of *Government Publication Review's* "Theses and Dissertations in Documents" column will find the format familiar; Richardson is the editor of that column, and this bibliography represents a cumulation of lists already published by him and a retrospective search of the professional literature. The entries are grouped into six broad divisions: local government studies, state government studies, federal government studies, foreign government studies, United Nations government studies, and comparative government studies.

As Bernard Fry says in his introduction to the work, this meticulously compiled 120-page list of theses and dissertations is

"the first comprehensive bibliography of graduate research in the field." It will be of obvious use to master's and doctoral students who are interested in government publications as an area of potential research; this bibliography can serve as a starting point by identifying unexplored areas as well as useful models and methodological approaches. It also should prove helpful to a great many practitioners in libraries, since many of the entries are thorough bibliographies that could easily be adapted for in-library use. Documents librarians needing research literature to help them make a decision in areas such as collection arrangement and bibliographic control procedures will find some useful items here to supplement a search of the periodical literature.

The first one-third of the book examines what Richardson terms "The Sociology of Research in Government Information." Based on the 317 authors whose works he has compiled, the author produces a statistical portrait of those doing graduate work in the field. Some of the variables he looks at are the number of pages in the thesis or dissertation, quantitative orientation of the work, gender of the student, gender of the faculty adviser, scholarly eminence of the institution, subsequent publications of the student, and citations in Social Science Citation Index. These and several other inputs were assigned quantitative values and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). A variety of tables present the accumulated data, and Richardson discusses the results as they pertain to several hypotheses with which he began the project. Most of the results are not especially surprising: most would have expected dissertations to be longer and more quantitative than theses, doctoral students subsequently to publish more than terminal master's students, and the few library schools that emphasize the study of government publications (such as North Carolina and UCLA) to account for a very high percentage of the total work currently being produced. The only mildly interesting finding is that at the master's level (but *not* as the doctoral level) those with a faculty adviser of the opposite sex

are less likely to have their graduate work subsequently published. Richardson discusses this phenomena but does not adequately explain it; perhaps further research would indeed have yielded some significant insights and allowed his analysis to become something other than a statement of the obvious.

In truth, this is not so much the sociology of research in government information as it is the sociology of library schools that either have a Ph.D. program or require a paper for the M.L.S. Most real research is the output of working librarians who write articles and books, and they are not discussed here at all. The title of the book does not indicate that it will discuss only a very small, specialized realm of research regarding government publications: theses and documents. It really ignores the *education* half of the subtitle, failing to talk about introductory documents courses in library schools and their role as initiators of later interest in and research on government publications. Excluding practitioners, it deals only with the publications of library school faculty, discussing them mainly in the context of their faculty adviser roles. In Chapter 3, "Influential Faculty Advisors," Richardson devotes a page to each of several individuals he calls "the top advisors in government publications." What can one say about a chapter like this that fails to mention either Peter Hernon or Charles McClure but devotes a page to the author himself?

Certainly those teaching in library schools will find the analysis of student/adviser relationships interesting (although they will probably not use the

data, in Richardson's words, to "better understand the sociological context of their own work with students"). No doubt a potential Ph.D. student intending to write a dissertation dealing with government publications might wish to consult this book before choosing an institution. But otherwise one would be hard-pressed to find a potential audience for this type of study. It is doubtful that library administrators and department heads will use the quantitative data to "identify the strong schools and advisors who can provide them well-qualified candidates for government information positions," as Richardson envisions in his preface. This research is likely to be of interest only to those having a very strong interest in the history of theses and dissertations dealing with government publications. Even those who savor *anything* written about documents would be hard pressed not to admit that this is much ado about nothing.

But we really should not fault Richardson too much. Quantitative analyses are de rigueur these days, and there is strong pressure from within the scholarly community to include some form of elaborately formatted data in any work. Those working librarians not planning to return to library school and obtain a doctorate can always skip past the first third of the book and make use of the bibliography. Within its narrowly defined scope this compilation of research is exhaustive; it fills a long-standing need and is an important contribution to the professional literature of government publications.—Joel Zucker, *Jerome Library, Bowling Green State University, Ohio.*

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

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