

# Recent Publications

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Libraries and the Search for Academic Excellence.* Ed. by Patricia Senn Breivik and Robert Wedgeworth. Papers from the National Symposium on Libraries and the Search for Academic Excellence held March 15-17, 1987, at Columbia University's Arden House. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1988. \$25 (ISBN 0-8108-2157-5). LC 88-15855.

This collection documents the Symposium on Libraries and the Search for Academic Excellence, sponsored by the University of Colorado and Columbia University in 1987. Ten papers commissioned to provide background for the participants as well as three speeches, two discussion summaries, and action recommendations are included. Most of the current cycle of educational reform reports beginning with *A Nation at Risk* have ignored libraries even though the Information Age permeates the reports and "academic libraries constitute the point of access to most information on campuses." Undergraduate education is the focus of the reports and of the symposium, which sought to provide a catalyst "for libraries to be more active partners in the educational arenas both at the campus and the national levels."

The symposium has been covered by both the higher education and library press. Furthermore, the descriptions of projects in most of the papers will be familiar to academic librarians who read journals or attend conferences, and at least two papers are available in other publications. Nevertheless, readers will probably find new ideas and insightful summaries. For me, the interdisciplinary centers at the Newberry Library are an ex-

ample of the former, and Colette Wagner's realistic analysis of the nontraditional student and Ward Shaw's description of library computing are examples of the latter.

Among these academic leaders "empower" has become a cliché and its repetition is irritatingly frequent. The word, however, does signal the pervasiveness of politics in educational reform. Irving J. Spitzberg's assessment of "The Politics of the Curriculum in American Higher Education" is the best article in the collection. Academic administrators will read ruefully his description of University Standard Time. More importantly, he provides much of the answer to Gordon Gee's and Patricia Breivik's questions about why libraries are not used more effectively and why reserves, lectures, and textbooks continue to dominate teaching. All accept that "the quality of the educational venture begins in the classroom but also depends upon the whole campus environment." However, the campus political environment seldom recognizes cocurricular life, "because the professionals engaged in the correlative work are second-class citizens in the campus political community. . . . They do not have the collective authority of the faculty dealing with curriculum issues. They are not as well organized as a vocal student minority." This reality is implicitly recognized in the conclusion from the panel discussions that the way to the institutional agenda may be indirect. A position on the national agenda for education with recognition of the potential role of libraries in all levels of education may provide leverage locally.

Interestingly, the topic of money was introduced only in the discussions. The library administrators note that the identification of new roles for libraries and librarians begs the question of where increased resources to support innovation will be obtained. The only course of action recommended during the panel discussions was to gain the support of the CEO and the trustees of the institution, and thus more politics.

Sadly, the recommendations provide confirmation of the existence of University Standard Time. To make possible self-directed, independent learners, "information and evaluation skills need to be mastered at the undergraduate level, and learning opportunities should be integrated within the existing departments, analogous to 'writing across the curriculum,' rather than stand-alone bibliographic instruction programs." In 1960, Patricia Knapp's Monteith Library Program sought "to stimulate and guide students in developing sophisticated understanding of the library and increasing competence in its use. To achieve this end, [the project] proposes to provide students with experiences which are functionally related to their course work."

Obviously, our libraries and our campuses have made frustratingly little progress toward the objective identified thirty years ago. Even in University Standard Time, this is exceedingly slow.—Ellen Hoffmann, York University, Ontario, Canada.

**Lancaster, F. Wilfrid.** *If You Want to Evaluate Your Library . . .* Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science, 1988. 193p. \$34.50 (ISBN 0-87845-078-5). LC 88-091-099.

Unrelenting pressure on library budgets is forcing administrators to look not only at those programs that can be reduced or eliminated, but also at the efficiency and effectiveness of mainline services. Toward this end, *If You Want to Evaluate Your Library . . .* arrives at a most opportune time.

Covering much of the same ground, albeit in a highly condensed manner as in his standard 1977 work *Measurement and*

*Evaluation of Library Services*, Lancaster begins with an excellent chapter that defines the evaluative process and then ties this definition to libraries via Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science. This is followed by chapters on the evaluation of document delivery and reference services.

Interestingly, the author prefaces this work by contending that the earlier *Measurement and Evaluation of Library Services* was "never . . . completely satisfactory for use as a text. . . . It is a review and synthesis of earlier literature rather than a practical guide to the conduct of evaluations within libraries." This clearly raises a classic "theory versus practice" issue, typically waged over the teaching of cataloging. Should courses stress the theory behind the process or practical technique? Ideally both. Evaluation without a theoretical base will leave the reviewer unable to utilize the results intelligently, while a theoretically sound review conducted inappropriately will render unreliable data from which to proceed. Fortunately, this volume exhibits a workable balance between theory and practice and should prove an excellent basic primer for students and practitioners alike.

Unfortunately, the mix of various types of libraries and areas within libraries is not so balanced. The overwhelming focus is on collection development and public services, to the virtual exclusion of technical services, and on issues that relate primarily to academic research libraries. If, for example, "your library" is a small public library interested in evaluating its technical services department, this volume will be of scant utility. In short, the title suggests a general guide to evaluation, while the content is much more narrowly focused.

Beyond the minor issue of the title, the volume should serve as a logical capstone to coursework in collection development and public services, and as a suitable guide for librarians contemplating their first evaluative process. The select bibliography will serve to guide those desiring more than an introduction, although identification of desired citations would have been facilitated by bibliographic listings at the end of each chapter, as was the case in the earlier *Measurement and Evaluation of Li-*