

The Whole Library Handbook: Current Data, Professional Advice, and Curiosa about Libraries and Library Services.

Comp. by George M. Eberhart. Chicago: American Library Association, 1991. vi, 490p. paper, \$25 (ALA members \$22.50) (ISBN 0-8389-0573-0). LC 91-17311.

At first glance this book would seem to be the answer to reference librarians' prayers for a single-volume compendium of timely facts, directory information, and statistics relating to libraries and librarianship in general. It is organized into chapters dealing with libraries as institutions, librarians, librarianship, library materials, library operations, special groups of library users, public relations, technology, current issues in the profession, and library trivia. It makes a valuable contribution by bringing together data on library size, expenditures, growth, and other quantitative categories from a variety of standard sources such as the ARL and ACRL statistics. Its many lists of agency names and addresses for services and institutions, ranging from national and regional archives offices to library placement services, are particularly helpful.

Upon closer examination, however, some questions arise regarding the book's ultimate usefulness. Its division into chapters fails to mask a certain quality of haphazardness in the selection of material for inclusion, which gives it the character of an almanac rather than a true handbook. The profusion of facts, figures, opinions, suggestions, sample policies, and trivial lore is indeed impressive if one reads the volume from cover to cover, but its index of only six pages does not allow the precision of entry which is commonly desirable in works of such scope. There is a very practical article by Anthony Amodeo entitled "How to Move or Shift Books," for example, but no entry in the index for either "moving" or "shifting." Similarly, those interested in using Macintosh computers for public use will find an excellent fillip by Patrick R. Dewey on that subject—but no mention of either Macintoshes or personal computers (or microcomputers) in the index.

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It is difficult to determine how this book will be used, to what extent, and by whom. It will surely take its place next to the *Bowker Annual* and the *American Library Directory* on the reference shelves of medium-sized to large libraries of all kinds, and it will just as certainly find its way into the hands of students, scholars, or general users anxious to find the winner of the 1956 Caldecott Medal or the significance of the tenth digit in the ISBN. It may not, despite the ambitious hopes of its editors, become the *vade mecum* of "librarians, library students, support personnel, friends, and trustees," but there is nonetheless a high likelihood of steady and perhaps even heavy use in academic libraries. Its slick cardboard cover and ungathered adhesive binding, though, do not augur well for sustained use; moreover, its not insubstantial price makes duplicate copies problematic. If successful, the publication will presumably undergo frequent updating, and indeed the

compiler, in the preface, wisely asks for readers' suggestions for improvements and additions to future editions.

One final remark, at the risk of appearing mean-spirited: a large chapter of the book, as well as substantial inserts into other chapters, attempt to inject a note of levity into the proceedings by presenting presumably humorous anecdotes about librarians, or reprinting whimsical lists of "worst serials title changes," and the like—all no doubt in the interest of "feeling good about the profession." Just as some people don't like mimes or light bulb jokes, so too others may find the compiler's mirthfulness distracting and perhaps even rather tedious. Nevertheless, the *Whole Library Handbook* has many positive qualities to recommend it, and even for those whose tastes in humor do not here find resonance, it will prove a useful and enjoyable book.—*James H. Spohrer, University of California, Berkeley.*

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