

knowledge to be covered cannot be determined by anyone but the trustees, since the decision rests on the determination of a long-term fiscal and educational policy. It is the same problem on the trustee level as the question of the value and duties of the faculty committee on the library. The ideal is a strong committee and a strong librarian, both broad enough in their interests to work objectively. If there is a weak committee it becomes a rubber stamp; if there is a weak librarian the committee tends to usurp the administration of the library. By their position the trustees are too strong for the librarian to oppose

them, and they should be warned away from purely administrative matters to fields where their peculiar knowledge and abilities will be most useful.

It is unfair to judge this much-needed manual by the chapter which most interests the library profession. If librarians are not too closely locked in their ivory towers they will realize that the general problems of the campus have been handled in it most adequately, even though librarianship may have been regarded somewhat casually.—*Helmer L. Webb, librarian, Union College, Schenectady, N.Y.*

Letters in Public Relations

How to Use Letters in College Public Relations; A Survey of Principles and Source Book of Effective Examples. William H. Butterfield. Harper and Brothers, 1944. 182p.

The subject of public relations is frequently thought of as something a bit esoteric, a semi-mysterious method by which a reputation can be created where none existed before or a poor reputation made over into a good one. Operating upon such a notion and pursuing such an objective, an institution sometimes will hire a public relations expert at a high salary and hopefully await a miracle of accomplishment.

It is true, of course, that public relations experts are frequently worth their money. But it is equally true that in the long run the public reputation of an institution can rise no higher than its source, that no amount of "experting" can substitute for administrative officials who are alive to opportunities for improving the public impression which they themselves are constantly making whether they consciously will it or not. Such officials can profit from the advice of an expert, but much of the final result will be wasted unless they learn how to make the most of their own efforts.

As institutions, colleges and universities can be especially deceptive to their own agents. To presidents and other administrative officials, they may seem—with their curricula and the paraphernalia of grades and records and degrees—wholly formalized. Left to its natural tendencies, it should be noted, ad-

ministration can become a creeping paralysis which minutely classifies and eventually ossifies official operations and turns all communication into stereotypes. Yet the human and personal contacts of a college or university are remarkably many and diverse, and the opportunity to use them wisely occurs frequently. Most parents, in the fondness of their parenthood, approach the college of their own or their child's choice in a misty-eyed manner which is much closer to that of a love affair than of the purchase of a specific commodity, education. Most students, at least in the beginning, look upon college as an exciting adventure. And alumni, as we have been reminded, often see their alma mater in the light of the "four happiest years of my life." The college or university which does not recognize this situation as vital for its public relations is missing its opportunity and part of its job.

Such are the implicit conclusions of the author of the present little book on the writing of letters in college public relations. Explicitly, Mr. Butterfield urges the college official not to wait upon the formal need or occasion but to write "those 'extra' letters" which take much of their effectiveness from the fact that they are unexpected. Congratulate the student or the alumnus upon his newest accomplishment, he says, as soon as you learn of it. Welcome the parent or other lay friend of the college to events at your institution in which he may be interested, even though he possibly cannot attend. Make your tone friendly and personal. Even letters which

carry the same message to many persons should be individually typed and personally signed. When possible, a handwritten note, however short, is even more effective. If all this sounds a little like some of the "service" propaganda of the luncheon clubs, it will hardly seem so in the context of particular instances which daily confront the college administrator.

Mr. Butterfield supports his thesis with many examples of the kind of letters which seem to him effective. The examples are useful and pertinent, but I find his own exposition, given briefly at the beginning of each chapter, more helpful. There is, for example, his list of those clichés in correspondence which can cool off the warmest of original intentions. Here are a few of them: "I take pleasure in," "your communication," "pleasure of a reply," "take this opportunity," "wish to acknowledge," "due to the fact that," "under separate cover," "I am happy to inform you." You can call them circumlocutions or simply bad English, but I suspect that almost anyone who handles much correspondence is sometimes guilty of using such stereotypes. Mr. Butterfield would have you not only increase the number of your contacts through letters but improve on their quality.

I assume that librarians in particular could take his words to heart. It may be that the formal and technical aspects of library train-

ing are worse than no preparation at all for the writing of frequent and personable letters. It may be that some librarians chose their profession partly to escape the personal contacts which Mr. Butterfield seeks to improve—though I do not know exactly why that should be. It may even be that college librarians are so frequently disappointed in the student, alumni, and faculty relationships they have already experienced that they are not anxious to increase them—although that doesn't sound logical either. But all chiding aside, how many of us look forward to receiving or reading letters from other librarians? (Mr. Butterfield, incidentally, makes much of improved relations by letter within the educational profession.)

An increased use of friendly, ingratiating letters would seem to be an inexpensive and not too difficult method of improving college library relations. The student, the alumnus, the donor to whom the letters might or should be written, is often a person with whom there is already some established relationship and if he is a stranger the challenge of establishing a good relationship by letter can be met largely at the librarian's own convenience. Friendly letters can be written by amateurs as well as experts. If any proof is needed on this point, the variety among Mr. Butterfield's examples has it to offer.—*Paul Bixler, librarian, Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio.*

Guide to Title Page Russian

Librarian's Guide to Title-Page Russian and Principles of Transliteration with an Introduction to Russian Law Books. Elsie Basset. Columbia University Libraries, 1944.

What with the present interest in and growing importance of Soviet Russia, an increasing number of librarians is apt to be faced with the prospect of handling literature in the chief language of that country. They will find helpful information and clues to some of this in the handbook under review, particularly if they have no knowledge of Russian. The volume addresses itself especially to catalogers of legal literature.

It contains a section on language, in which spelling, pronunciation, and, of course, the vexing problem of transliteration are briefly discussed. Here one finds a list of "words

most commonly found on title pages of Russian law books with their most common meanings." Another section is devoted to the various phases of the cataloging process. Under the heading "Official Publications," the author describes the Russian calendar; lists the chief legal texts, from the eleventh-century *Russkaya Pravda* to the Stalin Constitution as well as the publications containing Soviet statutes; and supplies the entries for the government bodies of both the imperial and the Soviet eras. The volume concludes with suggestions for further reading on the topics treated and with a bibliography.

The author is generally well-informed and judicious. It is difficult, however, to see why *A Short History of Russia* by Mary P. Parmele is the only work on Russia's past which Miss Basset chooses to recommend. Within