

get libraries away from the "medieval state of individual acquisitiveness." Mr. Coney emphasizes also the need of work or performance budgets to show the relation of library services to appropriate university activities.

Discussion of this session was devoted to such matters as travel funds for scholars and for books (scholars going to where collections are, and possibly allowing collections to follow moving scholars), rivalry and specialization in collecting, the relation between financial problems and philosophical problems of education, and the pressure for expansion in terms of future needs. All of these are important problems for the consideration of the proposed commission.

The fifth and final session was devoted to "The Future." The statement of the AAU by its Special Committee on the Proposed Study describes the need for the study, its sponsorship, and scope. Dr. Paul Buck, newly appointed director of the Harvard University Library, provides the basic paper, "Looking Ahead." Dr. Buck takes a calm attitude toward the development of the university library. He is critical of librarians for having taken a negative approach to their problems. His credo in encouraging: (1) "the library is the heart of education," (2) "the library remains the great conservator of learning," (3) "quality education is impossible without a quality library," (4) "you cannot have a quality faculty without a quality library," (5) "a library is vital to proper exploitation of our intellectual resources," and (6) "the library is essential to maintenance of free access to ideas and to the functioning of the untrammelled mind." These, to Dr. Buck, are obvious truths, and librarians might well exploit them positively.

Mr. Williams has forestalled criticism of the discussions by indicating the exploratory nature of the conference. Most of the topics, if not all of them, have been on the agenda of the ARL and ACRL groups for many years. President Millett's original observations, whether or not they have been misinterpreted, have had some value in stirring thoughts anew. Dr. Buck's allaying comments should be taken in their proper perspective of the many problems facing research librarians. Speculation and guesswork need substantiation.—*Maurice F. Tauber.*

Serial Publications

Serial Publications; Their Place and Treatment in Libraries. By Andrew D. Osborn. Chicago: American Library Association, 1955. xiii, 309p. \$6.

Whatever else may be said of this book, it must be acclaimed as a landmark in the literature of professional librarianship. The mere fact of its having brought together the best thinking in the serials realm—heretofore scattered in innumerable small unmanageable parcels—would have been a sufficient gift for librarians young and old. But Dr. Osborn does not leave matters floating hither and yon as does altogether too much of our "impartial" professional writing. He sets up his problems, presents alternative points of view, and in all but a few cases (where, apparently, the weight of evidence is to him indecisive) he makes reasoned choices among available principles and practices.

A writer cannot be all things to all readers. Some of us will complain that the introductory pages on the history of serial publications are skimpy and unsatisfying. The author will reply with justification that these pages were designed only to set the stage with its magnitude, complexity and variety of problems. A few will say that the author's lengthy quotations from source materials are sometimes superfluous for readers with background and experience. Many will counter with the thought that such a combination of anthology and text is superb for the uninitiated librarians who make up a large population. Others will find fault with the overuse of large research libraries for example and authority. In mitigation of this genre of card-stacking, it may be said that only in these libraries can one find the full gamut of problems from the simplest to the most complex. Nevertheless, the emphasis on large library practice is unfortunate because, in matters relating to objectives, organization, division of labor, and personnel training, smaller institutions are radically different from their larger and richer relatives. Dr. Osborn was aware of this problem, but labored under the obvious difficulty of finding either a literature or a well-advertised sound experience upon which to draw toward a discussion of serial publications in

smaller libraries. In an area like the selection of serials, where small and medium-sized libraries have had adequate attention, the author does incorporate appropriate sources and discussions. So that, if a reader finds it hard to appreciate the enthusiasm for *New Serial Titles* as a selection tool, he will also find a well-rounded list of compilations with which to work.

Dr. Osborn's book does not explore fully all library sizes, types and situations (what book can?), but it does cover all phases of the serials axis save one—the training of serials librarians in library schools and libraries. A run-down of its chapter titles shows materials on library organization for serials work; serial selection; acquisitions; checking; a full debate on the visible index and its rivals; cataloging and classification; housing and servicing; reference and circulation; binding; microreproduction; rarities and archival material; publications of international organizations; reprints; abstracting and indexing; and union lists. Public documents, which are generally serialized or amenable to serialization, are considered throughout as an integral part of the serials constellation. An appended section samples a half dozen "whoppers" from the gallery of the thousand and one serial nightmares. The book may not be explicit on the aspect of training serials librarians, but it certainly contains mighty implications and suggestions for library schools and supervising librarians.

In a field so vast and various, so full of nooks and crannies of private opinion, there will inevitably be a multitude of differences among librarians with the best of dispositions and intentions. This reviewer, of course, has a number of his own prejudices and would like to air a couple here. He would question, for example, Osborn's clear preference for giving catalogers hegemony over the reference, acquisitions and binding processes. The author finds the experience of cataloging to be the outstanding preparation for reference work as well as for making decisions at other points in the library life of the serial. No one will argue the point that in the course of descriptive cataloging librarians develop a rich fund of expert knowledge which is indispensable to the other functions. It is equally true, however, that the context of reader use offers the best type

of experience for developing reference librarians. It is true also that knowledges and skills gained in the context of reference and research have at least as relevant a claim to leadership in decision making. One may say also that the valuable cataloging experience which Osborn celebrates is acquired mostly by librarians at seminal bibliographical depots like the Library of Congress and Harvard University, the institutions upon which he draws so heavily in deriving his own ideas.

Similarly, traditional patterns of library organization prevent the author from fully appreciating the merits of organizing serials functions around the core of reader services. Some library should be ready to experiment with a central serials section, operating with and located adjacent to the reference services, and manned by representatives of the catalog, acquisitions and reference services. (The University of California and New York University were at one time operating partly in this manner.) Herein lies the promise of an economically maintained central record to which each specialist and functionary can contribute his valuable part without disturbing tested organizational patterns.

The visible index, which Dr. Osborn has all but deified in his book, would then be the hub of serials activity without breaking down conventional departmental lines. The information it contains would then be available always at the critical point of use; and the time-consuming process of telephoning to an acquisitions point would be avoided. Naturally, other forms of organizational invention would enter the adapting of this pattern to subject-divided libraries. Apropos of the visible index, this reviewer does not feel that its full role emerged in clear definition from the many pages devoted to it. At times it appeared to be a master record of everything a library knew about its serial collection. At other times it seemed a current working record to be complemented by "S-cards" (holdings record) in the shelf list, in the public catalog, and/or in a serials catalog. Doubtless there is no one and only course to recommend in such matters; but we would have appreciated knowing the author's conception of a model catalog and record system.

We would also have liked to have his firm conclusions in the chapter on binding, wherein too many moot questions remain

unresolved. We find, in the same category, the plaguing question of whether to keep a monographic series together or to classify its component parts separately. Osborn says that the presumption is in favor of scattering a series "whose component parts should obviously be on classified shelves by author and subject." What makes such matters "obvious"? Do we disregard binding and classification costs along with probable frequency and manner of use if a monographic work in series looks like a monographic separate? We could use some brass-tack definition here as well as in the treatment of series entries on pages 166-69. And, alas, the matter of displaying current unbound serials! Do we page, or pay for replacements—many of which are not even available to be paid for? Many librarians have arrived at the sad formulation that those periodicals which are most eligible for display should be kept on closed shelves. Or, nearer despair, you make available on shelves and tables only what you would discard!

But then, again, if Dr. Osborn had answered all questions and made pat decisions for us in all instances, he would have deprived us of freedom of choice in matters which must, for the time being, remain flexible. We are grateful to him for this and for the splendid common sense and balance displayed in weighing available alternatives. This author has risen above empty rigidities and hollow professional talk which sometimes reverberates so loudly as to prevent our hearing ourselves think. He has refused midwife attendance to mountains laboring to bear those ugly little mice which frighten timid young librarians away from "operation serials."

If, as Osborn indicates, the serial is displacing the conventional book from the center of the reference stage, it is time for re-orientation. This book and its excellent bibliography constitute a foundation on which we can rest for many a year.—*Sidney Ditzion, The City College of New York.*

The Harvard Library

Report on the Harvard University Library: a Study of Present and Prospective Problems. By Keyes D. Metcalf. Cambridge:

Harvard University Library, 1955. 131p. \$2.50.

This report is perhaps the last from Harvard to bear the name of Keyes Metcalf—the last of a long and distinguished series that document the recent history of the world's greatest university library. Never has any other university library told its story so fully, so conscientiously, and with such benefit to the library profession—its goals, its problems, its needs, and its methods. To appreciate the magnitude of this achievement and to see this report in its proper perspective, one should look first to the last supplement, which is "A Selected Bibliography" of affairs of the Harvard library.

This bibliography is impressive. The *Harvard Library Bulletin* is a significant feature. Although most of the publications originated during Metcalf's administration, a few of the older classics, such as Currier's "Selective Cataloging at the Harvard Library" (1924) are included. Among the fifty or so titles that follow, there are Osborn's "The Crisis in Cataloging," and all the familiar works of Metcalf's other colleagues—Edwin Williams, David Weber, William Jackson, Susan Haskins, and Philip McNiff. Yet Metcalf's own contributions dominate the list—his work on acquisition, space, finance, cooperation and specialization, and administration. To him the credit is largely due for this extraordinary record of the Harvard library during one of its most critical periods, when it finally faced the overwhelming problem of growth.

This report is the last of the series as far as Metcalf's administration is concerned; it is hoped that his successors will carry on. Indeed, this last official statement was written for his successors, particularly the new director of the library. It deals with the situation of the library as he left it, "its weak spots and the things that might have been done or should have been done, but have not." It also discusses "in some detail the library's financial situation and its needs for the future."

The chapter on acquisition summarizes the familiar perennial problems that relate to the building of the collections: the effect of acquisition on subsequent library costs, the formulation of an acquisition program, the dilemma of duplication, and the de-