

Recent Publications

BOOK REVIEWS

Spyers-Duran, Peter, and Gore, Daniel, eds. *Economics of Approval Plans*. Proceedings of the Third International Seminar on Approval and Gathering Plans in Large and Medium Size Academic Libraries, Held in the Ramada Inn, West Palm Beach, Florida, February 17-19, 1971. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1972. 134 p.

Librarians probably use their literature to better advantage than most professional people. We readily learn from others in our field because we are inclined to write about our experiences and also because we read a lot. To learn more about approval or gathering plans, I recommend the reading of *Economics of Approval Plans*.

The editors of this small volume might just as well have titled it another "how-to" book with the following possibilities: ". . . Establish an Approval Plan; . . . Choose an Approval Plan Dealer; . . . Save Money With an Approval Plan." Actually, the title was taken from the first essay in the book and it only partly describes the contents.

As the subtitle tells us, it is Number 3 in a series of seminar proceedings on approval plans and from all indications the subject has been exhausted, at least until a new breed of approval plan is devised to aid or bedevil the librarian.

The papers are varied in quality and style. We have the scientific approach of a study of the economics of approval plans as well as chatty, off-the-cuff statements explaining why approval plans fail. There is reported a case history in establishing the plan in a medium-sized university by LeMoyné Anderson, a useful account pointing out pitfalls along the way. One paper recounts for us the kinds of plans offered by three major dealers, a revealing study that is good to have at hand, although such information becomes dated very fast.

One chapter is concerned with a panel discussion by book dealers; conversational in tone, it really contains little of significance for us. Comments such as "bugs in the program," "our sales were suffering," etc., were hardly worth capturing on paper.

Have we answered all the questions? Does anyone still have doubts? At least one of the papers would lead us to believe that there are indeed no unanswered questions: "It seems obvious that the approval plan technique for building research libraries is here to stay. The results of the present study clearly demonstrate its efficiency and effectiveness." [Axford]

Richard Chapin finalizes the volume with his witty summary which turns up some sharp deductions about the three-day conference. Once again we are reminded that "we don't know what we're talking about." Who has yet defined a gathering plan, an approval plan, a blanket order? The importance of collecting current materials and doing it well is noted by Mr. Chapin as he opines that 80 percent of all research done on a university campus is based upon materials published in the last ten years. He takes to task the writers of "efficiency papers" because "they seem to indicate that books received on approval plans get on the shelves at hardly any cost." There are still selection costs, despite the best efforts of the dealers' computers.

The book does not repeat what has been said before at the seminars, for the most part. New ideas, strategies, and experiences from which most of us could benefit will be found here. On the other hand, the library scene has changed somewhat since these papers were written, a fact which will have to be taken into consideration when reading the book.—Roscoe Rouse, *Oklahoma State University, Stillwater*.

Wasserman, Paul. *The New Librarianship: A Challenge for Change*. New York: Bowker, 1972.

Paul Wasserman's new book is an impor-

tant one which will provoke considerable discussion. In it he notes that "Criticism serves to open debate, to admit to a range of options, and to awaken a partisanship which must defend itself in the open marketplace of competitive ideas and prescriptions." His criticism does just that.

Wasserman feels the profession is failing society; that its leadership is conservative and unresponsive; that we develop collections at the cost of service; that we recruit the wrong kind of people; that our professional organizations, our library schools, and our literature are inadequate to solve today's problems, much less tomorrow's; and that libraries, all libraries presumably, are already an endangered species perhaps soon to be a footnote in our history like the Chautauqua movement.

It is a well-organized book, based on the imaginative identification and use of sources too often overlooked. The author's knowledge of the process of change and his analysis of what he feels is needed in developing leadership to do it are thoughtful and perceptive. If much of this is not new, it is presented from a new viewpoint, it is based on careful and creative research, and there is a kind of luminous sincerity in the author's concern for his subject, a sincerity somewhat marred by passion.

The book is a polemic which compels our attention and, not surprisingly, it is also irritating. Wasserman's style is occasionally obscure, even turgid, and many will be annoyed with his fondness for vogue words—congruent, viable, relevant, dysfunctional, alienated, societal, syndrome, etc. A more serious irritant is the author's arrogance, that very arrogance which has discredited the whole intellectual community. We are a sorry lot, we librarians, and there is no health in us. We are old and tired and middle class and our values and virtues, if any, are meaningless. A young, jobless welfare mother may be a villain; a working middle-aged librarian must be. In this sense, it is not only an academically fashionable book, but a sentimental one as well.

Aside from the book's passion, its Band of Hope flavor, and its modish assumptions, one of its more serious flaws is that it addresses itself to the whole of librarianship as an entity. It must be increasingly evident

to all that this is not valid. The unique clientele, resources, goals, and governance of our various libraries do not lend themselves to Wasserman's blanket indictments and broad generalizations. The differences between the Newberry Library and the Newark Public defy comparison.

Wasserman is a hopeful man. He anticipates replacing today's ineffective leadership with young people (of whom he is tenderly fond) drawn from the behavioral and social sciences, moved by an idealism we have long lost, who will somehow, through greater sensitivity and compassion, superior education, and a more demanding society, revolutionize our present concepts of library service. This done, they will move us further toward that unattainable goal, the elimination of poverty, ignorance, evil, and injustice. I wish it so may be.

Whether they do or not, Wasserman has suggested a sophisticated way of examining our problems, based on high ethical and professional standards, and we cannot just murmur "*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*" Nor can we ignore his perception of reality, avoid recognizing his critical talents, or retreat to a permanently defensive position in a demanding society.—*Stuart Forth, Pennsylvania State University College, University Park.*

Houghton, Bernard. *Out of the Dinosaurs—the Evolution of the National Lending Library for Science and Technology.* Hamden, Conn., and London: Linnet Books and Clive Bingley, 1972.

This is the first in a projected series from British publisher Clive Bingley on "The Management of Change—Studies in the Evolution of Library Systems," and *Evolution* is also in the subtitle. The title itself refers to one of NLL Director D. J. Urquhart's more provocative statements, here highlighted facing the title-page, comparing the failure of traditional libraries to see the significance of the NLL, to the dinosaurs' fatal incomprehension of the new species appearing around them.

It occurs to me that no one has adequately dealt with the thrust of Urquhart's analogy in that quotation, and one must include Mr. Houghton in that, despite the title-page fanfare. For, as indicated in a recent British