

Cave, Roderick. *Rare Book Librarianship*. London: Clive Bingley; Hamden, Conn.: Linnet Books, 1976. 168p. \$10.00 (LC 75-29045) (ISBN 0-85157-180-8 Bingley; ISBN 0-208-01360-1 Linnet)

Two apparently mutual irreconcilable concepts characterize rare book librarianship—custodianship and exploitation. The one can be best explained in light of the historical precept of entail; the other, in terms of restrained or responsible utilization, rather than selfish or base utilization. Actually, the congruent factor, common to both concepts, is that of responsibility. It holds them together in an uneasy balance and is what rare book and special collections librarianship is all about. A consideration of some of the problems associated with these two concepts is what *Rare Book Librarianship* is all about.

For some years now Cave has been associated with the Department of Library Studies at the University of the West Indies, Jamaica. This book, however, is said to be distantly related to a series of lec-

tures delivered at Loughborough University in England before Cave took up his post on this side of the Atlantic. As such, the orientation is decidedly British, but it speaks to students of American librarianship as well. After all, if one agrees that rare books and special collections constitute a special category of materials requiring different treatment from the mass of library materials as to acquisition, processing, preservation, and exploitation, then problems are seen to emerge which are indigenous to the material, not endemic to a geographical point in space and time.

Cave devotes short chapters to discussing "the nature of the rare book," acquisitions, processing, care and restoration, housing (custodianship), organization, "publicity and publications" (exploitation), and the "training of rare book librarians." Perhaps some of his bias is evident in dismissing the role of the book scout in the antiquarian trade (perhaps in England, not necessarily in this country) too summarily; in omitting the *AB Yearbook* as a source for dealers' specialties; and in dismissing almost in a sentence the handling of manuscript material—a class of materials a good number of American rare book and special collections librarians are faced with, where the distinctions between print and nonprint resources are not always recognized and acknowledged by administrators as much as they might be abroad. Visual archives of a pictorial nature and, of course, that once, but no longer, distinctly American phenomenon—oral history collections—are completely neglected.

The chapter on the "training of rare book librarians" is alarmingly brief, but this speaks more to the poor state of affairs obtaining both here and abroad in terms of training and the uncertainties ahead concerning this speciality within the field than it does to Cave's treatment. An uninspired bibliography, an appendix (extracts from the report, *Book Thefts from Libraries*) of limited value, and a rather perfunctory index round out the small volume.

In spite of these reservations, the book is not without value. It brings together in a short and easily readable manner many of those problems which are unique to and which will become the daily routine of rare book and special collections librarians. It

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should be of interest, therefore, to prospective specialists and novices, rather than to experienced practitioners already involved in maintaining the delicate balance between custodianship and exploitation. If nothing else, Cave's *Rare Book Librarianship* reminds those beyond the pale that even today, in the time of the "now" generation, some of us continue to regard our professional responsibilities as threefold in nature—to the past, to the future, as well as to the present.—*John F. Guido, Head of Rare Books, Archives, and Special Collections, State University of New York at Binghamton.*

Edwards, Ralph M. *The Role of the Beginning Librarian in University Libraries.* ACRL Publications in Librarianship no. 37. Chicago: American Library Assn., 1975. 120p. \$6.50 (LC 75-30693) (ISBN 0-8389-3167-7)

"What do librarians do when they are doing well as librarians?" Out of this general perspective the author conducted a study of beginning librarians in eight University of California libraries to learn about the nature of their work. Among other questions he asked them, "Which of the tasks you are asked to perform on your present job would you define as less than professional?" The survey was conducted in early 1970; the dissertation which grew out of it earned a Ph.D. in 1972; and the book was published in 1975.

Four of the seven chapters report that survey; the other three are an attempt to place the study in a larger historical perspective. The canvassing results are interesting though hardly surprising; the larger perspective is very surprising though not terribly interesting.

The larger perspective is, in fact, nothing else than a review of the literature concerned with library professionalism. The weakness in this, of course, is that one faces the very real possibility of capturing a somewhat limited view of the real library world. What would happen years from now, for instance, if someone attempted such a perspective on university library administration largely based on all the articles on this subject by library science faculty?

I have other criticisms of the work. For one, the author has on too many occasions

proffered conclusions which are wider than the premises established in the survey. What is true of beginners is not necessarily or even often true of seasoned veterans. Neither can one conclude that the computer is not playing a significant role in the professional work at the University of California libraries just because it is not significantly part of the beginner's role (page 66).

For another, in dealing with a definition of professionalism, he spotlights the sociologist's criterion of a body of knowledge in any valid profession. The author asserts that the only valid body of knowledge which would fulfill the definition of professional for librarians is that which a subject specialist would have.

The book has value in its limited area of concern, viz., the types of functions which beginning librarians are allowed to perform. It raises serious questions for those beginners, their supervisors, and administrators, just as it does for library educators. The author suggests that the beginner's inaugural period be clearly established as an

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