

the field of knowledge.

What was contemplated as a contemporary survey of the black academic library of the late 1960s is now a historical study. The delay in the publication may have been providential, for now we have a *corpus* of material to use in evaluating the present status of these libraries. The author states that the findings lend themselves to updating. This is a boon for researchers who may wish to use these results for further study.

Smith's work seems to carry forth previous studies that agreed that in the history of black higher education libraries have consistently remained below minimum standards. Each study reported progress and improvement, yet the libraries have not reached the status that they need to achieve in order to support the missions of their institutions. Generally, the studies suggest the infusion of substantial funds to enable these libraries to overcome their shortcomings.

The book is divided into six chapters dealing with historical perspectives, research studies, libraries in the black college, special collections of black literature, and black academic libraries and research collections. There are four appendixes and an extensive bibliography. There are forty-four tables and one figure.

Since the completion of the study, significant developments have taken place and these developments are addressed in footnotes. Recommendations are made throughout the study. The need for a follow-up study is assessed in the concluding chapter with examples of issues that need to be considered in future studies.

Jessie Carney Smith's work can proudly take its place among the enduring pieces of library history. She has wrought wonderfully.—Casper LeRoy Jordan, *Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia*.

Barker, Nicolas. *The Oxford University Press and the Spread of Learning, 1478-1978*. An Illustrated History by Nicolas Barker. With a Preface by Charles Ryskamp. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978. 69p. plus 332 plates. \$25.00. LC 77-30541. ISBN 0-19-951086-5.

What a handsome book this is! Careful attention to design, judicious selection of

typeface, luxurious use of white space, and the inclusion of more than 300 excellent full- or half-page plates, some of which are in color, combine to make this volume a well-nigh sumptuous memento observing the quincentennial of its remarkable publisher. There is moreover wide variety of interest represented in the plates. Many are of title pages or openings of Oxford University Press books, but there are also reproductions of landmark documents from the press archives; portraits of important figures in its history; pictures of buildings, composing rooms and pressrooms, type punches, and matrices; and other memorabilia depicting its five centuries of service to scholarship. It is an exciting book to look at.

It is more, however, than just a pretty book. Although he does not presume to supersede the several thorough textual histories of the Oxford University Press, the author nonetheless provides an extensive and provocative commentary on the illustrations that comprises an excellent summary of its work. There is a full body of relevant anecdotes, there are sketches of important events and circumstances, and there is an adequate chronological framework to give the whole a kind of sequential as well as spiritual unity.

Here, for example, one finds accounts of the fascinating bibliographical "pre-history" of the town of Oxford, of its long association with Bible publishing, of the importation of the Fell types, and of the relationship of the press to the rest of the English trade. One finds also the stories of the great monuments of scholarship with which the press has been associated: Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*, Pococke's works on the Levant, Sir James Murray and the OED, Liddell and Scott's *Greek and English Lexicon*, and many others. Here are the personalities that made the press run—Archbishop Laud, Dr. John Fell, Sir William Blackstone, and others—inspired by the author and illustrator with new life. Benjamin Jowett, for example, master of Balliol College, takes on a new dimension when we read the undergraduate doggerel:

First come I. My name is Jowett.
If it's knowledge, then I know it.
If I don't, it isn't knowledge.
I'm the Master of this College.

We somehow know Charles Cannan better when we read that only he "knew the difference between the Oxford University Press and the Clarendon Press, and nobody dared ask him what it was" (p.54).

Not quite everything, however, is well with this book. There are a couple of anomalies about it that must be animadverted upon. First is that, although the book is presumably an exhibition catalog, that presumption is no place addressed; its unusual structure and reference system would have been more immediately comprehensible had it been made clear, probably on the title page. Second is the unaccountable omission of a number of illustrations; there are references in the text to some thirty-nine plates that were not included in the volume reviewed, although that exemplar gave no appearance of being imperfect.

These, however, are minor matters in a volume otherwise so excellent.—*David Kaser, Indiana University, Bloomington.*

Librarians of Congress, 1802-1974. Washington: Library of Congress, 1977. 273p. \$7.75. LC 77-608073. ISBN 0-8444-0238-9. (Available from Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.)

The first eleven administrators of our nation's foremost library are successively introduced to us in this handsome book. The esteemed historian who supplies the preface is the twelfth of that line. The series was commissioned originally for publication in the *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress*, starting with the April 1975 issue, to celebrate its 175th anniversary, which coincided with our country's bicentennial year. Nine of the eleven contributors are professionally linked to LC. All evidently used its resources while preparing their assignments. Portraits, holograph letters, and other archival photographs liberally illustrate the texts, each of which is meticulously footnoted.

Six of the subjects, including the first five, devoted relatively limited portions of their careers to library work. Each man is fleshed out personally, with his full range of activities reviewed in detail. We learn much about political events that have little to do

with the library. Five studied law and one was a physician, though most turned soon to politics. Three were journalists or author-publishers, and one was a poet, while at least two others also built reputations by writing. Only one was a library school graduate, but three others brought extensive library service to their appointments. Thomas Jefferson twice gave the post (with some hesitation) to the Clerk of the House of Representatives. Not until a Congressional investigation by the Joint Committee on the Library led to the dismissal of his second appointee were the two positions divorced.

Until the Civil War the Joint Committee participated directly in such matters as development of the book collection. In those early days the library was, in spite of fires, overcrowding, and other episodes of physical neglect, a social gathering place. Frederick Marrayat called it "the best lounge at Washington" but observed that "the books are certainly not very well treated" (p.72). Three early incumbents in a row were fired, for reasons varying from fiscal negligence or, worse, to alleged secessionist sympathies. Another three nineteenth-century appointees served over thirty years each, but only two are remembered as significant figures in the library's history. Every service of over fifteen years, however productive, closed with overtones of outlived usefulness. Time marches swiftly on, even in libraries.

The final four biographies span the first three-quarters of the present century. Their tempo accelerates rapidly from such fin de siècle triumphs as moving into "the" new building, developing the LC classification system, and producing printed catalog cards. Subsequent achievements, in spite of uneven financial support, have made the Library of Congress virtually, if not in name, our national library. We follow the various leadership styles of the latter-day librarians with growing appreciation for their varied capabilities and years of fruitful work.

The research supporting these studies is for the most part competent and dependable. There are a few errors of fact, none of them substantive. John Russell Young is mistakenly identified as the only one who died in office (p.169). The article on Herbert Putnam leans heavily on previous