

ness, the implication being that these sectors are more service oriented than are libraries. Because this reviewer believes strongly that the service ethic has declined precipitously in *all* segments of society (including libraries) over the past forty years (try to reach *any* human being by telephone today; try to get a reply to *any* business correspondence), he finds this almost entirely platitudinous. A statement of commitment to excellence does not, in itself, guarantee even adequacy.

Chapter 8 gives us a few pages on what "leadership" means in libraries and chapter 9 tells us that service quality is a critical issue in academic libraries and in higher education in general. None of this is new or inspiring.

Chapter 7 presents a hodgepodge of methods that libraries could use to examine quality of service, everything from reshelving surveys to OPAC transaction logs; and chapter 6 (which seems out of place logically) discusses how data collected could form the basis for a Service Quality Information System.

Although not stated explicitly, the authors seem to draw their inspiration from Total Quality Management. They prefer the subjective impressions of library users to more objective and quantifiable measures of user success (e.g., shelf availability).

They also are prone to wild assertions that they fail to substantiate, such as "thinking of library users as customers is a new concept for many librarians." As someone who has worked in or around libraries for more than forty years, this reviewer believes that librarians once thought of users as customers (see, for example, S. L. Wallace's 1956 *Patrons Are People*) but forgot this important principle as they fell in love with technology and saw "automation" as an end in itself—compare the number of books written today about library users with the number written about library technology!

Finally, a book published in 1996 should surely give great emphasis to networked information and the digital library, because one can reasonably expect that users will exploit such resources in ways different from the ways they exploit print resources and, thus, criteria relating to "service quality" could be different. Although some rather oblique references occur in the text, the topic is never really addressed head-on and the terms *digital library*, *electronic information*, *Internet*, or even *network* do not appear in the index (which, in any case, is rather pathetic).

This is not a book I can recommend to either library managers or students of library science. Both the theoretical discussion and the survey instruments have been done better before. A hardbound version (ISBN 1-56750-209-1) is also available at an almost unbelievable price of \$52.50 for fewer than 200 pages.—*F. W. Lancaster, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*

**Olson, Michael P.** *The Odyssey of a German National Library: A Short History of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, the Deutsche Buecherei, and the Deutsche Bibliothek.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz (Beitraege zum Buch- und Bibliothekswesen, Bd. 36), 1996. vii, 122p. DM78. ISBN 3-447-03648-6.

No previous book has been published addressing the subject treated in this volume. For a German reviewer, it is surprising to see that a book about the German library system was published in English in a well-known German publisher's series. At the outset, this reviewer should acknowledge his respect for the author for tackling this subject. It must be difficult for someone from outside Germany and its specific (library) history to understand that this idea is one that is influencing librarians' work today. Although Olson does not emphasize the fact that this discussion

impacts the daily work of librarians, many decisions for planning a national, or even a regional or local library structure, and for offering adequate library services for patrons, depend on this historical development and its consequences for the present situation.

A national library, in the traditional sense of the term, never existed in Germany. For his presentation, the author created a virtual library consisting of more than one institution. It could be argued whether this special choice of institutions—as indicated by the subtitle of the book—fits all of the characteristics of a national library. But one has to confess that Olson's choice is well justified and that he presents a detailed discussion of his understanding of a national library for the period from 1558 until today. The author considers the many political changes in Germany and their consequence for the library infrastructure, especially for the periods of the World Wars and, most recently, after the Unification of 1990. There can be no doubt that the latter development has made Olson's job much more complicated. On the other hand, it is doubtful that the subject would have been of such interest before the Unification.

Throughout the book, Olson takes the view of a social historian; he always sets the special events of library history in the larger social and political context. If the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries had been in better focus, Olson would have realized that some typical duties of a national library were, and are still, organized by cooperation among dozens of libraries. This especially includes a form of approval plan for non-German books and periodicals, and interlibrary lending services. This cooperation is supervised through a complicated network of responsibilities and funding within the federal organization of Germany and has its roots in the historical absence of a national library.

The aim of the book is described well: it is to present a historical description of the libraries in question. Each library has had a discrete historical development, and Olson summarizes each library's history through such topics as financial support, holdings, directorships, buildings, cooperation, and services. Fortunately, the description is not standardized; it is always flexible enough to give adequate attention to the respective special features of individual libraries. It is a well-written combination of historical facts and derived conclusions. However, in some parts the presentation becomes too enumerative and broken; one gets the impression it would have been easier to write a book with twice as many pages.

The book contains the following chapters: "Mephistopheles," "Monads," "Imperialists," "What If," "Dark Years," "Four Two One," "Forward to the Past," and "What Remains." These headings are neither easy to understand nor well suited to automatic indexing, but each chapter treats an important historical period and the headings become understandable after reading the chapters. The author does not claim to be comprehensive but, rather, focuses on the primary historical trends. For more details, the reader is referred to an ample bibliography.

Any reader of the book will understand why Germany never had a national library, and what events and obstacles—even during the period of the Third Reich or in the phase of reconstruction after the Second World War—prevented its establishment. The author emphasizes that strong resistance from librarians played a significant role in this process. The Deutsche Bibliothek in Frankfurt was established as the only new institution after the War, but with only some of the duties of a national library; and even with this limited role, its establishment was not an easy task. The founding of a real national library

would have diminished the significance of the existing libraries, each with its own tradition and status. Such a development was opposed by politicians and librarians. There are no signs that this situation will change within the foreseeable future.

The actual situation after the unification of Germany in 1990 is treated in the last chapters, and this last part of the book can be read as the question: Does Germany need a national library? There is no doubt that in former times library work would have been more effective if there had been a national library in the conventional sense. After unification, many leading librarians, as well as others in Germany, were of the opinion that work must go on, rather than wasting time and effort with building up entirely new structures. Olson addresses this question in a general and sensible way when he explains the difficulties in finding agreement on names for the unified libraries. (It is worth mentioning that the unification of the Deutsche Buecherei in Leipzig and the Deutsche Bibliothek in Frankfurt is called Die Deutsche Bibliothek or "The Deutsche Bibliothek." It is doubtful whether anyone not familiar with the German language, in which a preceding article beginning with an uppercase letter indicates a proper name as distinguished from an article beginning with a lowercase letter, will wonder why it is printed "the Deutsche Bibliothek" on the cover page and "The Deutsche Bibliothek" in the CIP entry. In fact, these are two different libraries, but one of them is the virtual unification and includes the other.)

By way of conclusion, Olson asks: "What is the fate of German libraries after unification? To what extent will librarians bridge conflicting ideological beliefs? Answering these questions will be essential for subsequent histories of the German national library system." This reviewer is not convinced of his

answer. In that librarians are members of the society and therefore have social and political responsibility, this assumption may be correct. But once more, it needs to be emphasized that this is not the time for discussing and realizing visions that go beyond technical improvement.

Optimistically speaking, one can say that the improved technical means make it more practical to distribute the duties of a national library to the shoulders of its many partners. An important lesson learned from Olson's discussion of a German national library is that there must be a well-organized library system that fulfills all the duties of a national library for the benefit of all its patrons.

The purpose of creating a virtual national library goes beyond satisfying the desire for national prestige. German librarianship has been, and in large part still is, isolated in the international setting. But globalization will change this situation. Whether intended by the author or not, this reviewer thinks that this book will be a valuable contribution for further development of supranational virtual libraries (e.g., the project GABRIEL for European libraries). In this sense, this book can be regarded as a work not only about a special subject of library history, but also one that has implications for today and for the future.—*Winfried Goedert, Fachhochschule Koeln, Koeln, Germany*

**Readings, Bill.** *The University in Ruins.* Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard Univ. Pr., 1996. 238p. \$29.95. ISBN 0-674-2952-7. LC 95-47290.

The chief business of the American people is, in President Coolidge's memorable formulation, most certainly business; and we have known at least since Veblen's *Higher Education in America* (1918) that a university's business, too, is chiefly business. Rhetoric about personal development, intellectual commu-