



## BOOK REVIEWS

***The Conservation of Library Materials/*** Alice W. Harrison. Occasional Paper 28. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Dalhousie University School of Library Science. 1981. 210pp. \$10.00. ISBN 0 7703 0164 9.

The conservation of library materials has long been a subject of professional concern for librarians and archivists, and an increasing one, particularly among those serving the research community.

*The Conservation of Library Materials* is a compilation of eighteen articles on specific conservation topics that appeared in the Canadian *Atlantic Provinces Library Association (APLA) Bulletin* as 'Bulldog Clips,' a name emanating from a popular and tenacious fastener used in conservation work. The author, Alice W. Harrison, a professional librarian with twenty-five years experience and a commitment to sound conservation practices in libraries, undertook to write the 'Bulldog Clips' column following her 1976 APLA-sponsored study of sixty institutions and firms engaged in conservation work in Canada, the United States, Italy, Jamaica, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Written between July, 1977 and July, 1981, the individual pieces were reviewed for accuracy by professional conservators, updated, and

revised to include new treatments or products, prior to their re-publication in compiled form.

The book has several strong points which recommend it to the librarian seeking a general understanding of basic conservation issues and practices. The author explains complex processes simply and clearly and demonstrates her commitment to objectivity by comparing the views of several conservators on any given subject. Mrs Harrison also provides the names and addresses of resource persons and suppliers and gives the reader well-chosen suggestions for further readings with each article, which include sources which describe the history of the various processes, as well as those detailing formulae or repair techniques.

There are, however, a number of serious criticisms one can level against the work, most of which stem from the hasty transfer of existing serial pieces into a single work format without the necessary, though promised, editing and rewriting. For example, the text follows the order in which the 'Bulldog Clips' originally appeared, rather than a more logical or topical arrangement. The transition from newsletter column to 'chapter' is so rough that the text continually refers to 'this issue (of the newsletter)' and even previews subjects (p. 57) to be covered by future columns which do not subsequently appear in the book. The inclusion of line drawings to illustrate the descriptions of techniques would have been marvellous; but, like most other works in this field, the book has not a single illustration.

In the overall weighing of strong and weak points, *The Conservation of Library Materials* balances toward the positive side as a useful tool for the conservation-conscious librarian, particularly in the presentation of a range of expert opinions and resources.

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***Libraries & Computers in the 1980s: a Report to the Nation/***Dan Eaves. Melbourne: Australian Library Promotion Council. 1982. 35pp. \$2.50. ISBN 0 909739 20 X.

Dan Eaves has produced a down-to-earth, uncomplicated, readable and realistic assessment of what computers mean to libraries at the present time and in the foreseeable future. He is not overcome by the myth that, because so many are now computer typeset, books on paper will become extinct and will be accessed via computer terminals. As he points out, books have been produced in coded form since the invention of the monotype machine and 'the idea of reading a complete book from a computer terminal is absolutely unrealistic to anyone who has ever used a terminal for any period of time'.

Eaves recognises that it is in the production of and in the provision of access to indexes that computers have their highest value for libraries and, in this context, there is some discussion on the justification of charging for access to these services.

In another area, I am pleased to report that Eaves debunks the popular myths. He points out that Prestel and other viewdata systems do seem to have a future, but not one which will change the way we use libraries or newspapers. The limitation of Prestel is demonstrated by the fact that it would require more than five minutes and more than forty 'pages' to transmit and display data of one page of share market information in the Australian Financial Review.

Eaves concludes that 'should Australian viewdata systems come into being, libraries will no doubt subscribe and offer their use to

library customers. However, that use will be as one more reference tool (and a clumsy one at that) among the hundreds of others stocked by libraries'.

In conclusion, I like the Report to the Nation on *Libraries and Computers in the 1980s* because it demolishes much of the mythology about automation. I commend the booklet to those who think they know nothing about computers and libraries – it should be compulsory reading for those who think they know everything.

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***Research in British universities, polytechnics, and colleges.*** 2nd ed. Boston Spa, West Yorkshire: British Library, Lending Division. 1981. Vol. 1: Physical sciences. £30. ISBN 0 900220 87 2. Vol. 2: Biological sciences. £20. ISBN 0 900220 88 0. Vol. 3: Social sciences. £20. ISBN 0 900220 89 9.

This directory was first published under its present title in 1979-80 and is to appear annually. It supersedes *Scientific research in British universities and colleges*. In addition to the institutions mentioned in the title, the Social Sciences volume includes a wide range of British government agencies.

The basic division of each volume is by broad subject field (Chemistry, Microbiology, Social Administration). Within each of those subject divisions there are entries for all the institutions with appropriate research programmes. Researchers heading each project are named, with a few words describing the project, eg the University of Wales St David's University College entry in the Planning and Human Geography section includes an entry:

Dawson J A Dr – Shopping-centre development in Australia (Nuffield Foundation: 1977-80) . . .

There are supplementary indexes by person and by keyword, but the keyword index appears to have a controlled vocabulary: 'pigs' are always 'pigs' (except for one straying set of 'piglets'), not 'swine'.

The volumes seem designed to be marketed to special libraries and academic departmental offices, in that each is substantially self-sufficient. Several fields are listed in two volumes, eg Psychiatry and Psychology in both of 2 and 3. (The listings here are substantially the same, but the 3rd volume apparently was prepared for printing later, and so carries extra entries.)

An important principle of arrangement is that all entries for a single academic department are kept together. This obviously saves administrative and editorial labour, but is also a boon to the prospective graduate student or visiting academic trying to estimate the 'mix' of a department he might go to. It does mean, however, that the enquirer depends on the keyword index to find the study of 'public house entertainers' (imagine the rush of applicants for research assistants' jobs) concealed within the staid Social Administration classification for the University of Aberdeen's Department of Social Work programme.

As the sample entry above shows, many entries mention external funding bodies, and the great majority show the years for which the research programme has or will run. Entries are on the whole limited to post-doctoral work.

Current research, in contrast to published research, is a bibliographical morass. *Research in Britain universities, polytechnics, and colleges* is one of the most useful works in the field.

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