



BOOK REVIEWS

Microcomputers in the schools / ed James L. Thomas. Phoenix, Arizona: ORYX, 1981. 158pp. US\$22.50. ISBN 0-89774-001-7.

The purpose of this book of readings is to show how micros are being used and what their potential might be for teachers, administrators, and teacher-librarians/media specialists in the school setting. Consequently, articles have been selected to serve the informational needs of a beginner as well as the more sophisticated reader.

The work begins with a state-of-the-art report and is followed by four main sections: considerations in selection (a very useful section for teacher-librarians who are involved in school-wide resource selection), hardware and software development, applications in the curriculum, and trends and issues for future development. The appendices contain a glossary of terms, a resource guide, funding sources, a national report of student use of computers in schools, and a list of organisations that supply information on micros and computer literacy. An extensive bibliography provides further references.

The qualifications and background of the contributors are impressive and no doubt this book would enable a school to save time and money in the elimination of duplication of effort and costly errors in judgement. Teacher-librarians and teachers will find the sections covering Selection and Curriculum Applications most interesting and the Glossary of computer terms most useful.

Yet I think librarians will be rather disappointed in this text. Many of the articles were first published during 1979 so that they are a few years out of date. The larger majority of references throughout and the bibliographies in the appendices refer to papers published in the 1970s. Considering that advances are being made at a breathtaking rate in the area

of microcomputer hardware and software this limits the usefulness of the text. Virtually nothing is provided regarding computer applications in school libraries, apart from a few fleeting comments.

In their paper Micro-computers and the school library, first published in *The School Librarian*, December 1979, Horner and Teskey argue that computer hardware should be housed in the school library and that the programs on tapes or floppy discs should be catalogued, classified and shelved with other non-book materials and fully integrated into the library stock. In order to indicate how dated this article has become I quote further:

Programs could also be developed which would allow quick retrieval of information about different classes of books in the library . . .

Microcomputers could also be used to keep a computer file of the issue and return of books . . . indeed almost any permutation and combination of library records that a teacher-librarian could wish for.

S James Henri

Riverina College of Advanced Education

Beyond Fact: nonfiction for children and young people/compiled by Jo Carr. Chicago: American Library Association. 1982 224 pp ISBN 0 8389 0348 7.

This book could be considered a 'must' for every librarian responsible for the provision of books to children. The subject is that much neglected area of children's literature – nonfiction. Nonfiction is not universally thought of in the same way as fiction is. Information books are thought inferior and lacking literary style.

Beyond Fact is a collection of essays compiled to counter this myopic view by exploring the meaning of quality and stimulating interest in nonfiction writing for children from kindergarten to grade eight. As such it deals with trade books, not texts, which offer stimulation and pleasure reading for its own sake. The contents cover an overview of nonfiction, science, history, biography and controversy (those ethical and scientific questions about which everybody should be informed).

Within each there are essays by either librarians, editors, writers, scientists, teachers or reviewers on what constitutes the 'best' in nonfiction writing for children. It becomes clear that there are universal factors which must be put together so that 'the

writer's vision becomes the reader's vision' (p10), thereby making nonfiction books outstanding literature. These factors include intellectual content (more than rudimentary facts), authors' enthusiasm, accuracy, balance (pointing out strengths and weakness), writing style and readability.

Also for each Section of nonfiction writing there are unique aspects which must be resolved, to give a book literary merit. For example. . .

scientific concepts are extremely complicated, as well as abstract, so writers of science books for children must be able to use language with precision (p45)

a biographer's aim is to bring a person to life in a way that is true to the reality of that person's life. Facts alone are not enough (p135)

an often quoted standard for books about controversies is that they should be objective and balanced. . .

everyone involved in the controversies is being subjective and biased (p166)

Examples are given from some of the best nonfiction books to illustrate how these dilemmas are resolved.

Beyond Fact fulfils its aims by clearly and succinctly pointing out the requirements that make quality nonfiction books for children. In the process one's interest is stimulated by the numerous passages of exciting and interesting writings from those quality nonfiction books mentioned throughout. This book together with *Matters of Fact* by Margary Fisher will help librarians choose nonfiction books to satisfy any child's request for a 'good' book to read.

Brian McDonald

Albert and Logan Library Board

AACOBS to hold NIP seminar

IN ASSOCIATION with the annual meeting of the National Council in Canberra AACOBS is conducting a seminar on Thursday 11 August on aspects of National Information Policy. Non-librarians will speak on developments and issues vital to librarians, though outside their immediate concern.

The keynote address will be given by Dr V.G. Gledhill, Managing Director of Wicat Pty Ltd, on National Information Policy and technology. Dr Robin Bell from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department will speak on the problems of Copyright and the new technologies. The Assistant Secretary, Communications System Branch, Department of Communications will speak on National Communications policy – the state of play in the new Government's efforts to develop a coherent policy.

Mr E.R. Banks from Telecom's Business Development Branch will speak on telecommunications and the new information era. Neil Tuckwell from Publishing and Broadcasting Pty Ltd is to speak on alternative telecommunications networks and services: should there be a national monopoly? Finally a panel of distinguished librarians will consider the implications of developments on libraries. It should be a stimulating day – be there!

The Seminar will be held in the theatre of the National Library of Australia from 8.40 am to 4.15 pm. All are welcome. The cost to members will be \$25.00, non-members \$30.00, and to students \$18.00; this includes morning and afternoon tea and lunch. Those wishing to attend should contact Marion Newman, Secretary, AACOBS, National Library of Australia, Canberra ACT 2600 (062) 62 1641.

Discovering Books & People

An insight into new books and their authors. Covering a wide range of topics from computers to gardening.

\$2.00



I would like you to send me "Ron Mercier's Book Review Magazine" monthly. I enclose my cheque/money order for \$27 which includes postage, packing and insurance. Or you may charge my Bankcard No.

My Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____ Postcode _____

Publisher's Note: It is a matter of importance with us that if you are not completely satisfied you should return this magazine within 10 days and your purchase price will be refunded.

A free plastic holder valued at \$6.95 with every subscription.