

agement engineering and mechanical engineering, all significant fields for a technological library.

The editing of the volume is uneven, and among the errors noted are a citation to the *United States Catalog* published in 1938 (p. 41), a suggestion that the *Monthly Checklist of State Publications* (whose title is inexactly cited) includes listings for significant municipal publications (p.51), reference (p.45) to a list of dealers on page 15 when that list occupies pages 46-47, and omission of the *Union List of Serials* in "Inclusive Listings of Periodicals" (p.58). Though many periodical abbreviations are used in the supplementary references at the end of chapters, no key to these abbreviations is included in the manual.

The book includes many lists of dealers and library supply houses and a number of descriptions for currently available library equipment and forms, which enhance the value of the book as a manual of practice. They also contribute to its early obsolescence.

Despite its faults, however, the book should be a useful manual in the smaller technical library where standard works on library administration are not readily available. Whether so long and so specific a how-to-do-it text is the most practical orientation for the busy executive is perhaps debatable. And it is hard to conceive that this manual can have much usefulness for the library school student whose needs extend considerably beyond the rather limited discussions of management and organization problems included here. For this last group of users, the chapter on reference techniques will probably offer the most useful information.—*Carlyle J. Frarey, Columbia University.*

The Subject Catalog

The Use of the Subject Catalog in the University of California Library. By Leroy C. Merritt. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1951. (University of California Publications in Librarianship, v. 1, no. 1) 18p. 35¢.

With this publication the University of California inaugurates a new series of studies in professional librarianship under the editorship of J. Periam Danton, Donald Coney, Robert Vosper, and Mr. Merritt. In an area where relatively few such series exist, the appearance of another is an event to be cele-

brated with appropriate commendation, encouragement and praise, particularly when the first number is so prophetic of the probable significance and excellence of others to follow. The study is well-designed and attractively printed, and the University of California deserves high praise for so auspicious a beginning. It would be encouraging to observe the development of similar series at other major library schools so that fuller reporting of the results of significant studies than is now feasible in existing professional journals might be realized.

Most, if not all of the previous studies of use of the subject catalog suggest that this approach to library materials is less-used than tradition maintains. Some studies have apprised us of the need for greater integration of printed bibliographies with the card catalog since bibliographies will give better access to a larger bulk of material and will be used more widely. In some other studies there is even a subtle implication that the relatively slight use of the subject catalog by scholars and specialists may justify its eventual abandonment, or at least its drastic reduction in size and scope. As Merritt points out, however, these studies have been limited largely to the use of the subject catalog by comparatively advanced students; "none . . . is concerned with the more casual use . . . by the average college undergraduate." This study reports an attempt to measure this casual use which seems to have resulted in important findings.

California, like other libraries faced with rising costs and static or declining budgets, was interested in reducing its cataloging costs. Careful analysis of contributing factors led to the conclusion that a truly meaningful reduction could result only from economies in subject cataloging. In this study Merritt reports the results of a year-long investigation to determine whether any curtailment of subject cataloging might be attempted without impairing service to catalog users too much. At California, such a study was made feasible by the existence of a divided catalog and by the installation of the IBM book charging system. In a series of samplings, each of which showed a high positive correlation with the others and with the total sample, 12.6 per cent of the total circulation of monographs "with catalog assistance" was analyzed. Although the resulting figures do not take

account of catalog use for other than book loans, there is no evidence in the study to suggest that, were such an analysis possible, significantly different results would obtain. The study, in fact, demonstrates high regard for tight methodology and objective analysis and evaluation of results.

Based on this analysis of who borrowed books of what publication date in which language on what subjects, the conclusion reached, that the efficiency of the subject catalog may be expected to decline to a level no lower than 80 per cent of its present effectiveness if a subject approach to library materials is limited only to those titles published in the English language within the past twenty years, is particularly significant when Merritt demonstrates that a reduction of nearly 65 per cent in subject cataloging load (and presumably in costs as well) can be realized through adopting such a policy. To librarians hard-pressed to reduce cataloging costs and still maintain a high quality of service, this will be a welcome conclusion. The figures cited pertain to only one institution, of course, and this single study cannot determine whether the conclusion is equally valid for another institution or for another type of library. The suggestion is provocative, however, and merits further studies in other libraries to corroborate the validity of the findings under other conditions. For example, are patterns of subject catalog use in public libraries so different that this study is irrelevant to that problem? It is obvious, of course, that where the volume of English language acquisitions bulks larger, or the percentage of current imprints is higher than at California, less savings in subject cataloging can be realized. Yet one suspects that it is in the academic and the research library where the cost problem is felt most acutely, and it is in such libraries that the pattern of acquisitions should resemble closely that at California. Merritt's findings are significant in that they tend to conform in a general way to the conclusions reached by Knapp, Brown, Swank and others, and in that they do not support a conclusion that the subject catalog might be abandoned altogether.

Of course there will be some to argue the accuracy and reliability of this study since its conclusions run counter to traditional concepts of library service long held. But to those others who are perceiving that modern

economics preclude perpetuation of lovely traditions unless they contribute markedly to the over-all quality of library service, this study will offer some hope of reconciling budget and service. And to those who are deeply concerned with the efficacy of the modern subject catalog, now grown in some libraries to overwhelming proportions, here is some prospect that the colossus may be cut down to manageable size and effective positive programs developed to improve the usefulness of the vestigial subject catalog which remains.

Merritt's straightforward presentation of the results of the California study is commended to the attention of all who are concerned with the construction, maintenance and interpretation of the library catalog. Here is positive evidence that there are ways to study the complex problem of catalog use and that out of such studies it will be possible to attack the problems of cataloging costs and of catalog intelligibility with some hope of ultimate success.—*Carlyle J. Frarey, Columbia University.*

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