Review Articles

Information Processing Equipment

Information Processing Equipment. Edited by M. P. Doss. New York: Reinhold, 1955. 270p. $8.75.

This collection of the papers of a symposium held in 1953 includes ten papers. The first is "Special typing, stenciling, hectographing, figure preparation and miscellaneous equipment"; the second, "Lensless copying with sensitized papers"; the third, "Photography in the laboratory"; the fourth, "Microcopying . . ."; the fifth, "Xerography"; sixth, "Letterpress and offset printing"; seventh, "Author's guide to effective slides"; eighth, "Audio methods for handling data"; ninth, "Storing and finding technical information with punched cards"; and finally "Numerical data-handling machines."

This miscellany not only duplicates information in other sources but also duplicates within itself—i.e., Stenafax is illustrated and described on pages 11-12, where it may belong, and then is re-illustrated and redescribed briefly on pages 47-49, under "lensless copying with sensitized paper," where it does not belong.

New processes, such as Kalfax, are not covered since the basic material on which this "book" was based was all delivered two years ago.

The range of topics, presented with only the most general data on when or where each is suitable economically, runs from reading glasses for two or three diameter enlargement, to typing, to photomicrography, high speed moving picture cameras, slide projection equipment, audio recording devices, etc.

The treatment is uneven. In some of the articles a great deal of technical information is assumed. In others, the difference between 16, 35, and 70 mm. film is described and illustrated. Some of the material, such as that on office dictating machines and movie soundtracks, is simply dragged in, as are slide rules and conventional office-type adding machines and calculators.

The collection of papers is profusely illustrated, and a large percentage of the illustrations seem quite unnecessary—among these, illustrations that appear to add so little to what is so commonly available as to be a waste of space would be: the IBM electric standard typewriter, the Varityper, a publicity picture showing three desks with machines on them and labeled "a battery of three automatic typewriters . . . ," a Dick stencil duplicator, a Photostat camera, seven conventional microfilm cameras and reading machines, x-number of pictures of notched or punched cards, etc., etc.

Some of the illustrations are definitely misleading. One shows a man standing next to a pile of books almost up to the top of his head and holding a box of microfilm. The impression it gives is that the small roll of microfilm (weighing 1.5 ounces) takes the place of all this. The caption is "Microfilm for condensation. . . ." But it goes on to say that this film was made for a student . . . and includes all the *pertinent material* found in the 366 pounds of volumes (italics supplied). If the *pertinent material* does not equal the total, and it cannot, then what honest purpose can the illustration serve?

This symposium volume does not add up to a coherent, seminal contribution to knowledge, and the price of $8.75 for its 270 padded pages is far out of line with the material that might be derived from it that is not readily available elsewhere.—*Ralph R. Shaw, Graduate School of Library Service, Rutgers University.*

Technical Reports

The Technical Report; Its Preparation, Processing, and Use in Industry and Government. Edited by B. H. Weil. New York: Reinhold, 1954. 485p. $12.

This book makes an important contribution to a critical area in the documentation of research. Its scope is clearly indicated by

the title and in general its promise is borne out by the text.

The 24 chapters and two appendices are grouped under five general headings. Part 1 is devoted to the functions of the technical report in industry and government. Part 2 deals with preparing and processing the reports and covers details of writing, illustrating, editing and duplicating. Part 3 is on distribution, Part 4 on filing, and Part 5 on use. Every aspect of the technical report is treated, from writing to reading.

There are two general areas in which this collection of papers can be criticized. The first is the manner of address. The audience is for the most part the amateur in each of the many aspects of writing, duplicating and handling of reports. In a few instances this results in such inanities as "Grammar is a subject that cannot be avoided in report writing" and "No filing system needs to be completely original." With respect to the first example, in particular, some compromise might have been safely made with the objective of comprehensiveness by omitting some of the lessons in sophomore English composition. Several books and many articles on technical writing are already available, as witness the bibliography of 71 items on pages 59-62.

The preoccupation of the book with the mechanics of preparing and handling technical reports may explain the second area of deficiency as viewed by this reader, namely the function or role of the technical report in the broad field of documentation of research and development. What is its relative importance in the whole field of scientific and technical literature? Is it primarily a necessary instrument of the research team in industry or government? Is its origin and continuance due primarily to security classification of information, both private and public? Or is it a handy device for applying the "need to know" philosophy of distribution? Perhaps this book is not the appropriate place for discussion of such questions.

Despite these general weaknesses, the work will be welcomed by many. In a book which is a composite of the writing of 23 different authors one does not expect uniformity in content, emphasis or quality of writing. Directed at every person—from typist to executive—who has anything to do with technical reports, this collection of papers achieves a surprisingly even quality, due no doubt to the work of the editor. It should be an invaluable aid, especially to those individuals in company and government departments who have a wide range of responsibility for technical reports.

Among a number of very useful chapters, three might be mentioned by way of specific examples. "Illustrating, Duplicating, and Binding the Technical Report," by B. A. Jones, is packed with information and might well be expanded into a book. "Cataloging Government Technical Reports," by Bernard Fry, is a compact discussion of points particularly relevant to the subject. And "How to Locate and Obtain Government Information Reports," by Patricia Brown, would be a happy contribution to the volume if it consisted only of the table on "Document-Issuing Government Agencies." The subjects of many other chapters are treated with equal effectiveness.—*Herman H. Henkle, John Crerar Library.*

Naval Academy Library Classification

Classification Schedules BB-BK: Aeronautical Art and Science, U. S. Naval Academy Library. Compiled by James M. Saunders. [Annapolis, 1954. 88p.]

In evaluating any classification scheme, one must take into consideration several items of prime importance. These are: Was the scheme developed for a particular library and, if so, is it easily adaptable to other libraries' needs? Is it a practical scheme? That is, is it expandable? Can new developments be placed logically and simply within the framework? Is it easily understood and usable by persons without special training or experience in the subject field?

To all of these questions, the answer concerning this classification is, yes. This scheme, developed by James M. Saunders, is primarily a classification scheme to which letter and numeral notations have been added. There is, for this reason, no evidence of forcing to obtain mnemonic notations or to arrange for systematic evenness in the expansions.