

with every foray into its pages a test of seriousness of purpose. The Gale index fortunately falls somewhere in between, is undeniably good, and could be better; it is neither clearly superior nor demonstrably inferior to what is already available. Libraries that have not kept their earlier CSBs, or did not require a working knowledge of how and why LC did it so well until networking forced the issue, or for whatever reason need a complete run of the CSBs, compactly packaged, with a within-covers index, could hardly do better. Others will need to weigh carefully the outlay of seventy-eight big ones against living in annotated and dog-eared comfort with what they already have.—*Eleanor R. Payne, University of California, Davis.*

Kaser, David. *A Book for a Sixpence: The Circulating Library in America.* Beta Phi Mu Chapbook Number 14. Lexington, Kentucky: Beta Phi Mu, 1980. 194p. \$9. LC 79-4298. ISBN 0-910230-14-5.

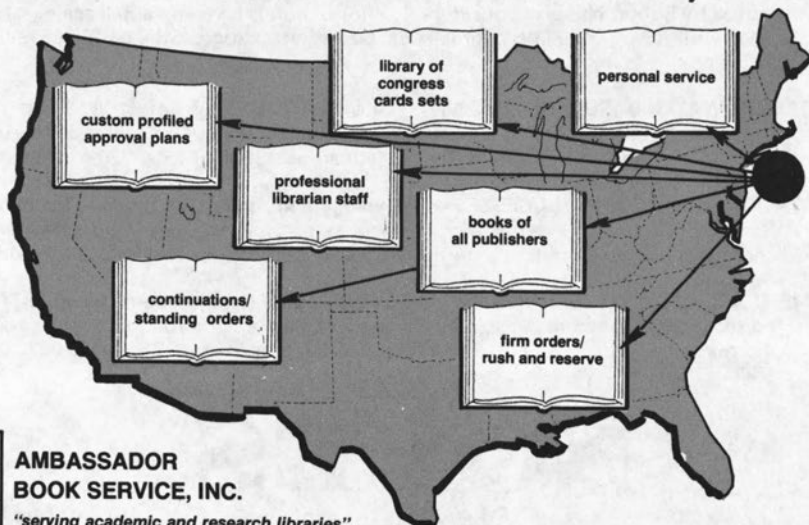
This publication gives American library history a full-dress counterpart to the his-

tory of circulating libraries in Great Britain presented in Devendra P. Varma's *The Evergreen Tree of Diabolical Knowledge* (Washington: Consortium Press, 1972). The very topic seems to inspire care in design, for both are especially pleasing examples of bookmaking.

The circulating library seems to have originated in America in 1762 when William Rind added a rental collection to his Annapolis bookstore. Patterned on agencies known in Britain and on the Continent for at least a half century and soon joined by others in America, Rind's circulating library was evidently a response to a widespread need rather than the consequence of a unique idea.

Interesting and important though it is to consider circulating libraries for themselves, the greater significance of such study is their meaning and contribution to the growth of libraries in general and the free public library in particular. That important agency was established as a consequence of two major developments, the acceptance of the principle of public support for education

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and the demonstration that the society truly needed institutions to supply its citizens with books.

Along with the social libraries, the free-enterprise ventures that were the circulating libraries helped demonstrate the magnitude of that need, and both types of libraries helped delineate the characteristics of the demands. Kaser shows how the collections of the circulating libraries supplied a full range of subject materials during their early years but then modified their coverage as other libraries undertook responsibilities for some subjects. In particular, he attributes the heavy concentration upon popular fiction that Shera emphasizes as the primary characteristic of the circulating libraries to the reluctance of the public libraries to devote large proportions of their resources to supplying fiction.

Kaser reminds us that the circulating library was by no means replaced by the free public library, and he carries the story up to modern times when, he shows, the virtual deathblow was delivered, not by other libraries but rather by the advent of the paperback and, most importantly, television.

Kaser's treatment, then, adds to our knowledge and completes the story of the circulating library in ways not previously available. Although Shera's account is reasonably complete for New England up to 1850, Ditzion does not consider circulating libraries even as a part of his discussion of the schizophrenia of public librarians about supplying fiction in tax-supported institutions.

With this study, Kaser, professor at Indiana University Library School, adds to his already substantial body of work dealing mostly with publishers and other commercial ventures closely allied to librarianship. He follows the pattern of his previous publications in writing history of an old-fashioned sort. He tends to give very extensive detail, to multiply quite largely his accounts of quaint particulars, and to express himself in prose of an antique tinge. Bernard Dornin's library was "ill-starred" (p.67) though he does not tell us why, and school officials "animadverted darkly" (p.88) about immoral books.

The typical scheme of treatment is a long

passage of detailed description of individual circulating libraries followed by a summary that seeks to extract generalizations. Some will chafe at reading details that seem merely to illustrate characteristics that have been exemplified earlier. Yet the book covers the subject thoroughly and will need no successor. All in all, it is a pleasing work that surely merits a place in every library that seeks to record the history of American life and society.—W. L. Williamson, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*.

Lane, Michael, and Booth, Jeremy. *Books and Publishers: Commerce against Culture in Postwar Britain*. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1980. 148p. \$16.95. LC 79-3135. ISBN 0-669-03383-9.

Books and Publishers by Michael Lane draws a picture of contemporary publishing in Britain from the point of view of a sociologist. Professor Lane has impressive educational credentials, including Cambridge University, is presently teaching at the University of Essex, and has written extensively for the best-known sociological journals. His present book is the result of interviews with large numbers of publishing executives in three subsidized year-long research projects carried out from 1966 to 1975. This is not, however, a report of that research but rather the author's reactions to what he has learned. Methodology, other than to mention the interview technique, is not detailed, nor are totals and percentages of responses marshaled to bolster opinions. Lengthy quotations of publishers' points of view are given, but it is never explained whether these are from stenographic notes, tapes, or simply impressions written down after the fact.

The book basically develops two models of modern British publishing: the traditional publisher, and the modern publisher. The traditional publishers are described as the product of an establishment elite; mostly small houses, run by old publishing families faithful to their vocation as purveyors of high culture, despite unfavorable economic realities. Production and sales are necessary evils; the editor is supreme. These editors typically have public school and Oxbridge educations, belong to the same clubs, and are the intimates of their authors in literary