



Recent Publications

BOOK REVIEWS

Energies for Transition: Proceedings of the Fourth National Conference of the Association of College and Research Libraries. Ed. by Danuta A. Nitecki. Chicago: Assn. of College and Research Libraries, American Library Assn., 1986. 248p. \$22, ACRL members; \$30, nonmembers. ISBN 0-8389-6976-3.

By now the fourth national conference of the Association of College and Research Libraries has been thoroughly reviewed in several sources (*American Libraries*, *Library Journal*, *College & Research Libraries News*). All the reviewers described the conference in glowing terms: the "highly efficient" Baltimore Conference Center, the "engaging" theme sessions, "fascinating" new product lines, and the "ultramodern" National Aquarium. Obviously, as this reviewer will testify, all who attended had a good time, and, according to the numbers (2,309 registrants, including exhibitors—second behind the Boston conference), the Baltimore conference proved highly successful.

What about those who stayed home? Should they purchase and read the *Proceedings*? When all the sizzle is gone, is there any steak? This volume contains the sixty papers presented at the conference, including forty-four position papers, nine idea briefs, and seven research papers. It does not contain theme papers, which received higher average evaluations (4.03) from the 377 responders who completed the evaluation forms than did the contributed papers (3.47; 5-point scale with 5 as excellent).

The mix of papers is interesting. In an earlier review for this journal of the third national ACRL conference, this reviewer commented on the importance of "well-

developed case studies and similar scholarly activities" in response to those who criticized the lack of research papers at the ACRL national conferences. Nonresearch papers continued to dominate at this conference. Librarians presented papers on the "importance" of research, "how" to do research, and "why" we do not do research, but the conference proceedings contained *only seven* research papers. While this number is misleading since some of the "position" papers included good, substantial research (and some of the research papers were less than substantial), this is an obvious imbalance.

The attenders generally supported this mix of papers. When asked their three major goals in attending this conference, 441 indicated "update my knowledge of current academic library practices," which is followed by "share ideas with others informally" (289) and "visit exhibits" (220). In *fourth* place is "learn about current research" (216).

Sharon Rogers reported at this conference a shift away from the "how we did it good" paper predominate in earlier conferences, and make no mistake, the quality of the papers has improved. Nevertheless, purchasers of the *Proceedings* may have different goals than attenders of the conference. If one can endure reading the entire proceedings, one risks overdose on papers that describe solutions to particular problems not generalizable beyond a specific library and pleas to accept a particular position. Descriptions of local implementation projects and position papers have an important place in this very pragmatic profession. Nevertheless, one of the two major goals of the ACRL conferences is "to promote study, research, and publi-

cation relevant to academic and research librarianship," with a subgoal "to encourage and sponsor forums for the discussion of research." Are we going to promote research through the conferences or not?

As with earlier conferences, the papers presented at this conference covered a wide range of information relevant to contemporary academic librarianship. In fact, the reviewer is struck by the accelerated rate of change and the introduction of new technology (and terminology) into the profession. The academic library profession may well be an example of C. P. Snow's "two cultures." Just by missing a conference or two, one can lose touch with current developments.

The range of paper quality is partially understandable and to some degree unavoidable. Unlike an editor of a journal, the contributed papers committee did not have the luxury of leisurely reading by a small group of experienced referees. With a conference, time is of the essence and to facilitate the process, selection of the papers involved more than seventy referees. Obviously, with this number of individ-

uals involved, there is ample opportunity for inconsistency in quality. The contributed papers committee, however, further compounded the problem when it "relied completely" on the referees' recommendations. This committee should exercise some editorial review responsibility since they have a perspective on the papers not shared by any one individual referee.

This reviewer has a few favorite papers and will indulge in the privilege of identifying them. Kathleen Dunn presented an excellent research paper on the psychological needs of undergraduate students in seeking information. She clearly explained a sophisticated methodology and the importance of her findings. Gunnar Knutson provided us with a provocative research paper in which he concluded (contrary to common knowledge) that no relationship existed between number of access points and total circulation of a sample of books he studied. Elizabeth Hood's position paper on self-censorship should give librarians cause to reflect on our principles, and Douglas Hurd and Robert Molyneux did an interesting study on delivery times and costs of a nonlibrary document delivery service.

In the final analysis, should the "stay-at-home" purchase this volume? Purchase of the proceedings, attendance at the conference, and presentation of papers are all important to support the development of the profession, and the reviewer is tempted to recommend purchase—if for no other reason. Many of the position papers and idea briefs are better heard and discussed than read, and the journals are more productive sources of research. The reader, however, can acquire a good cross-section in this one volume of the current issues and new developments related to academic librarianship. The *Proceedings* are worth the price.—Larry Hardesty, William Luther Cobb Library, Eckerd College, St. Petersburg, Florida.

Shailor, Barbara A. *Catalogue of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University*. V.1. Binghampton, N.Y.: Renaissance Texts and Stud-

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