

tors comment, speculate, and quarrel about a range of topics, including the management of vast amounts of information, the limits and potentials of social research in informing public policy, and the difference between information and knowledge. The results are enlightening.

Mancur Olson, a professor of economics at the University of Maryland, argues persuasively, in a paper typical of the volume as a whole, that ideology rather than any reasoned evidence from the social sciences determines the thinking of most voters and politicians. Both Left and Right, he charges, rarely have any evidence for their policies: they merely labor under what he terms a "rational ignorance." In a response to Olson's remarks, Newt Gingrich, the ubiquitous representative from Georgia, counters that people (and by implication Congress) are not rationally ignorant, as Olson maintains, but are rationally informed. Members of Congress learn what they need — not all they could. They recognize that they must make the best decisions possible under the constraints of limited time and knowledge. "Life is sloppy, hard, and complicated," Gingrich reminds us, "and too often our academic and intellectual elites have withdrawn from the fundamental realities of life." According to Gingrich, Olson's academic blinders prevent him from comprehending the realities beyond the economist's graph.

In a less combative and more scholarly vein, Ernest May, a professor of history at Harvard, in a penetrating article entitled "Knowledge, Power and National Security," offers a parallel caveat to Gingrich's insistence that we should take all of life into our analysis. May argues that we must never confuse information and knowledge. To illustrate his point, May compares the French and German intelligence corps prior to the Second World War. He offers an example in which the Germans' superior knowledge of the character and thinking of their enemy enabled them to act decisively even with very limited information, while the Allies' access to superb intelligence and an enormous amount of

detailed information, by contrast, was virtually worthless without a corresponding knowledge. May's analysis has merit for us today.

In an age enamored with the potential uses of information and a Congress awed by its burgeoning quantity and availability, we would do well to consider the significant ways in which knowledge and information differ. *Knowledge, Power and the Congress* confines its focus to the institutional life and political realities of Congress. The volume isn't aimed at or written by academic librarians, although James Billington, the Librarian of Congress, contributes a brief foreword to the volume. Even so, this title holds relevance for academic librarianship. While the book will not likely alter any collection development policies or suggest improvements in the day-to-day realities of the academic library, it offers its readers an opportunity to examine afresh the interplay between information and life—between data and understanding. It raises the kind of questions that we librarians and information professionals need to explore—questions about the nature of power, the significance of knowledge, and the meaning of the information revolution. Scholarly, thought-provoking, and surprisingly relevant, the book exemplifies the best in Congressional Quarterly's publishing tradition.—Steve McKinzie, Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

Science at Harvard University: Historical Perspectives. Ed. by Clark A. Elliott and Margaret W. Rossiter. Bethlehem, Pa.: Lehigh University Press, 1992 (distributor, Associated University Presses, Cranbury, N.J.). 380p. alk. paper, \$35 (ISBN 0-934223-12-2.). LC 89-64067.

For most of its history, Harvard University has been home to a considerable share of the science done in North America. Thus, when the university was preparing to celebrate its 350th anniversary in 1986, a volume commemorating Harvard's contribution to the organization and cognitive development of science in the United States made eminent sense. It also made sense that Clark A. Elliott and Margaret W. Rossiter would

have organized such a project. Both editors are well known to historians of American science, and both have much experience with the history of science at Harvard. Elliott, associate curator at the Harvard University archives, is himself a scholar and in the past twenty years has produced a series of reference books that have become indispensable tools for research in science history. Rossiter is professor of history of science at Cornell; her senior thesis at Radcliffe College dealt with Louis Agassiz, a central figure in nineteenth-century Harvard biology, and her subsequent publications include *The Emergence of Agricultural Science: Justus Liebig and the Americans, 1840-1880* and *Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940*.

Perhaps, though, it is just as well that publication of this volume was delayed for six years. While the anniversary celebration might have called for a series of synoptic essays, each providing an overview of the history of a particular scientific discipline in the Harvard context, *Science at Harvard University* makes no pretense of such completeness. Rather, it is a collection of eleven articles on fairly narrow topics—ranging from Toby Appel's sketch of Jeffries Wyman and the significance of personal character in mid-nineteenth-century Harvard natural history, to Rodney Triplett's analysis of the delay in founding a Harvard department of psychology until the 1930s, to an essay on the university's cooperation with IBM in the development of computers, prepared by I. Bernard Cohen (who as emeritus professor of history of science at Harvard was present at much of the history he relates).

The absence of essays on the history of certain disciplines is quite conspicuous. Only a small portion of one chapter deals with the basic biomedical sciences. In addition, chemistry and physics are virtually absent in this book; the period before 1800 is represented only by Sara Genuth's discussion of the role of comets in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century astronomy at Harvard; and discussions of the twentieth century, with one exception, omit the life sciences completely. In

a sense, then, this book is simply the locus for yet a few more studies of mixed quality which fill in some of the gaps left in the already copious work on the history of science at Harvard. But even in assembling a collection of assorted empirical studies, Elliott and Rossiter have made a worthwhile contribution. For example, Bruce Sinclair's analysis of the evolving relationship between Harvard and MIT, and how it reflected competing ideas about the goals of technical education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is first rate. Other particularly noteworthy contributions include the study of Nathaniel Southgate Shaler and geography at Harvard by David Livingstone, and John Parascandola's article on the biochemist turned sociologist turned philosopher, Lawrence J. Henderson. Incidentally, Livingstone, along with Curtis Hinsley who writes on museums and anthropology, also gives at least a nod to the role of libraries in discipline formation.

What makes *Science at Harvard University* special, though, are the editors' brief preface outlining the problems inherent in a project such as this, Rossiter's intelligent introductory chapter on the role of patronage in the institutionalization of the scientific disciplines at Harvard, and Elliott's three contributions: a historiographical essay, a select bibliography, and a chronology of major events (including some library developments). This book is far better than the sort of celebratory exercise that frequently accompanies major institutional anniversaries. If it is also less than it could have been, it is nonetheless a good and useful compilation of studies on science at one of America's oldest and most influential institutions.—*Ed Morman, Institute of the History of Medicine, The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland.*

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Idea of the University: A Reexamination.* New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Pr., 1992. 238 p. (ISBN 0-300-05725-3). LC 92-2928.

John Henry Newman's *The Idea of a University* is the most famous sustained commentary on the nature, purpose, and