

Recent Publications

BOOK REVIEWS

Social Issues and Library Problems; Case Studies in the Social Sciences. By Kenneth F. Kister. New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1968. xxv, 190p. \$7.95 (68-27447).

The purpose of this book, Professor Kister informs us in his preface, is "to train librarians for professional work with the literature of the social sciences" by means of the case study method. On the whole, it is a useful book and goes some distance toward achieving this objective. The thirty cases pose significant library problems in the social sciences as well as related fields such as history and education. The settings include academic, public, and special libraries of various sizes; but most of the problems are pertinent to social science librarianship generally. The questions emphasize bibliographical matters, reflecting the author's very sensible view that "the first requirement for professional [sic] librarians is an understanding of the formal bibliographic system which provides access to the literature and its contents." Kister goes on to argue that bibliographical expertise "becomes the basis for professional judgments regarding the selection, acquisition, organization, and retrieval of the literature." This contention is well demonstrated in the cases, which are complex and involve problems in collection development, reference techniques, public relations, professional and ethical judgments, and that *bête noire* of librarianship, censorship. The introduction provides a brief but useful appraisal of the nature and development of the social sciences, their literature, and its bibliography.

Much of the book's strength derives from the case study method. By using cases to pose his problems, Kister is able to demonstrate the complexity of library problems, the inapplicability of simple answers, and the importance of evaluation and judgment based on expert knowledge. The situation presented in "Science of Man," for example, requires not simply the development of a basic reading list, but also the evalua-

tion of bibliographical sources, judgments regarding reference practice, and a consideration of the "scientific" nature of the social sciences. "The Balancing Act" calls for an appraisal of reviewing media, a discussion of the merits and possibility of an ideologically balanced collection, and a consideration of the role of the public library. Such an approach is commendable and should help to produce librarians with the breadth and flexibility that today's information problems require. The sample analyses appended to the last case provide a welcome added dimension: a guide to the book's use for both the student and the instructor as well as a demonstration of the amount and variety of thought and effort that the case study method can provoke.

Unfortunately, this method has serious pitfalls as well as advantages, and Kister is not able to overcome them all. Much of the material in this book is characterization or background which has no relevance to the problems posed. At best, it is unnecessary weight or poor amateur fiction; at worst, it conveys "information" which seems most inappropriate—stereotypes of old maid librarians, bumbling scholars, callow young librarians, and ludicrous interpersonal situations which present a vision of libraries and librarians that is trivial, embarrassing, and quite at odds with the serious and sophisticated approach that pervades the book's problems and introduction. Anyone assigning this book to library school students should recognize these shortcomings and their implications. However, if used as its author suggests, to complement other materials and teaching methods, *Social Issues and Library Problems* should prove an asset to courses in social science bibliography.—Eldred Smith, *University of California at Berkeley.*

The Management of Libraries and Information Centers. By Mildred Hawksworth Lowell. Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1968. 3 vols. \$17.50 (68-12642).

Perhaps the most refreshing thing about