

Recent Publications

BOOK REVIEWS

Introduction to Information Science.

Comp. and ed. by Tefko Saracevic. New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1970. 751p.

This book is a collection of sixty-six papers by various authors. Most of the papers have previously been published elsewhere, and all are quite recent. (Only three pre-date 1960.) Most of the papers are important: Maron and Kuhns on probabilistic indexing, Swets on system performance, Leimkuhler on library systems analysis, Borko and Bernick on automatic classification, etc. Because these papers have appeared in journals as disparate as *ETC*, *College & Research Libraries*, the *Journal and Communications* of the Association for Computing Machinery, *American Documentation*, *Nature*, etc., their collection into a single volume is a signal service for which we owe Professor Saracevic and The Bowker Company a debt of gratitude. Because most of these papers have not previously been collected, and because their general quality is so high, this book should be purchased by every library that has even a minimal collection in the area of librarianship or information science.

A very regrettable feature of the volume is that in his general introduction, the editor does not help to clarify what this discipline that he calls "information science" is, but rather perpetuates and further compounds the confusion that is rampant in the promotional literature of ASIS, the bulletins of schools of "information science," and other publications. True, "information science" is, as Professor Saracevic states, a "nascent science," and we should therefore not expect a totally unambiguous definition of the field—especially since practitioners of even long-established disciplines often cannot do so for their own fields. Nevertheless, we do have a right to expect Professor Saracevic to explain whatever obvious lacunae and

gross disparities occur in his own definition.

The evidence presented in this volume suggests that the discipline it represents—whether one calls it "information science" or something else—is substantial and shows vigorous signs of approaching maturity. This makes it all the more regrettable that the editor has so misled the reader—particularly the reader who is new to the field and has not yet learned to discount the grandiose claims information science usually makes for itself—about the nature of the discipline to which the volume is an introduction. It should be stressed again that Professor Saracevic is not alone in defining information science more broadly than he conceives it in practice. Even the constitution of ASIS delineates the Society's area of interest as "information and its transfer" which is clearly not the Society's interest in practice. For example, the *ASIS Journal* would almost certainly not accept an article, even of very high quality, on the structure of Swahili, or the imagery of Keats, or problems in teaching arithmetic to ghetto children; yet all three articles could quite reasonably be subsumed under the rubric of "information and its transfer." (But then the *Journal* of ASIS has not kept up with what is going on in its parent society: it calls itself, in its "instructions to authors," a "... journal in the various fields in documentation." However, this states better than the constitution of ASIS what the real interests of the majority of the Society's members are.)

A final minor complaint: This book will probably be used primarily as a sourcebook. It is therefore regrettable that it does not contain an author index. This might have been more useful than the rather poor subject index that is provided.—*Kelley L. Cartwright, School of Library Service, University of California, Los Angeles.*

Planning the Academic Library: Metcalf and Ellsworth at York. Harry Faulkner