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BOOK REVIEWS

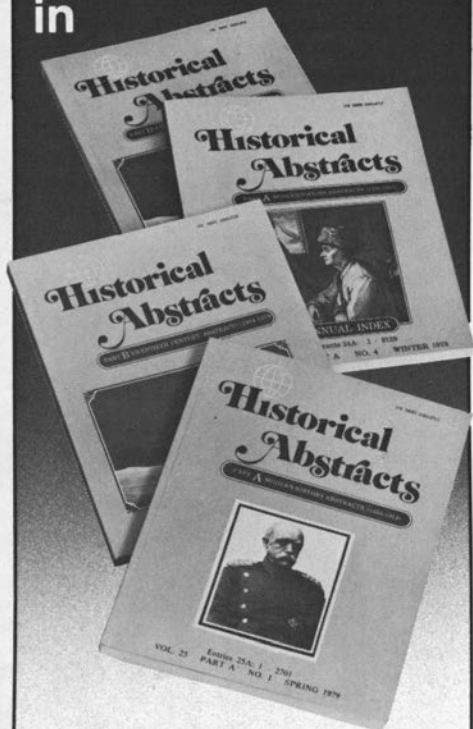
Comparable Worth: Issues and Alternatives.
 Edited by E. Robert Livernash. Washington, D.C.: Equal Employment Advisory Council, 1980. 260p. \$21.00; \$14.95 EEAC members. LC 80-67644. ISBN 0-937856-01-0.

A policy of "comparable worth" may be defined as one that compensates employees equally, not only for jobs that are equal or substantially equal as mandated in the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, but also for jobs that can be shown to be of comparable value to an employer. It suggests that it is possible to compare dissimilar jobs by iso-

lating and evaluating components such as level of skill required, responsibility carried, and so on. Supporters of comparable worth assume that implementation of such a policy would be an important step toward reducing job discrimination, particularly against women.

Comparable Worth: Issues and Alternatives presents a strong argument against the concept of comparable worth, which rests on two basic premises. First, that comparable worth has not been defined in operational terms and it appears that it will be difficult to accomplish this in the near future; and second, that comparable worth does not take into account market factors that are the basis for wage setting and efficient op-

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eration of the free market in the United States. The study was funded by a grant from the Business Roundtable and, not surprisingly, consistently supports existing compensation practices and warns against the chaos that contributors are certain will result from any movement toward putting into practice a policy of comparable worth. Contributed papers address the value of job evaluation, stating that its purpose is only partly to analyze jobs and compensate workers fairly and therefore it cannot be used as the basis for determining the worth of jobs (Schwab); point out that other countries are not dealing with this issue (Bellace); assert that there are always quantifiable reasons for differences in pay between men as a group and women as a group (Robert); insist that as more women move up into managerial ranks, the problem of apparently inequitable wages for women as a group will disappear (Milkovich); and, finally, state that any attempt to implement a policy of comparable worth will result in "regulatory quagmire" (Williams and McDowell).

Of special interest is the conclusion by George Hildebrand that if "in a full burst of passion for what its proponents would call social justice, the wage differentials between 'male' and 'female' jobs are slashed so that female jobs are increased even as much as 50 percent relative to comparable male occupations," there would be an inevitable increase in unemployment and welfare costs. This is because such a policy would have the greatest effect on "low productivity" workers, that is, women, by raising the price of such workers to the point that employers would not be able to afford them and would therefore "disemploy" them. Hildebrand concludes:

"... economic theory tells us that if comparable work is put into effect (1) unemployment rates for females will rise, (2) unemployment of females also will rise, (3) the major victims will be the poorest female workers, (4) welfare dependency will grow, (5) female youngsters will be large losers of job opportunities, and (6) there will be some withdrawal of discouraged women workers from the labor force, precisely because official policy, in the purposed service of a peculiar concept of social justice, will have destroyed their jobs for them, despite their own efforts to be productive and self-supporting citizens."

There are undoubtedly many ways to support arguments on either side of this controversy. The most disturbing aspect of this book, however, is its primary assumption that there is currently no problem that time and the good motives of employers won't solve. Such a condescending, even paternalistic, view of a situation in which women's salaries on the whole remain at 57 percent of men's salaries, and in which the largest proportion of both women and men will always remain in the service, clerical, or maintenance categories of employment, is appalling.

The implications of this view for librarians are clear. Despite what librarians perceive as a profession in which individual jobs are complex and demanding in terms of required skills and levels of responsibility, the typical characterization of librarianship as a woman's profession continues to have a negative effect on the salaries that librarians can expect to earn over the course of their careers. The debate over comparable worth is just beginning, and it will be important for librarians interested in fair and equitable compensation practices in their own profession as well as in the labor market as a whole to be aware of both sides of the issue. *Comparable Worth* presents only one side.—Tina Kass, *Research Libraries Group, Stanford, California*.

Personnel Policies in Libraries. Edited by Nancy Patton Van Zant. New York: Neal-Schuman, 1980. 334p. \$19.95. LC 80-11734. ISBN 0-918212-26-X.

This publication of sample personnel policies is intended, according to the author, to provide assistance to those who are faced with the "formidable task of writing a personnel policy in the absence of good examples." Unfortunately, the approach and the content of this book are unlikely to encourage either "good" policies or even the development of written policies. It fails to do an adequate job of explaining why written personnel policies are necessary to effective library administration, nor does it include any evaluation of the sample policies.

The book has two major focuses: the first, a summary of survey results from a questionnaire on personnel policies, and the second, the reprinting of sample personnel

policies. The survey questionnaire was developed to query public and academic libraries on the extent of their written policies and to identify the specific areas of personnel in which policies existed. Questionnaires were mailed to over 1,300 public and 1,000 academic libraries with 510 usable questionnaires returned from the former and 416 from the latter. The section of the book entitled "Survey" is an analysis of the information obtained from these questionnaires. An immediate problem in understanding the survey results is with the broad question: "Does the library have a written personnel policy which defines librarians' rights and their conditions of employment? . . ." The implication, then, is that the survey is directed toward policies for only one group of employees—librarians—even though following survey questions are addressed to policies affecting "library employees." For instance, the question on performance evaluation is: "Are library employees given performance evaluations?" Does this question refer to *all* library employees or only to the librarians referred to in the broad survey question? This is not simply nit-picking since most libraries have different policies for professional and support staff. Therefore it is important to know when reading the survey results and later the sample policies whether the information applies to all staff or only to librarians.

The bulk of the book, though, is devoted not to the survey results or general information on personnel policies, but to the sample personnel policies reprinted from public and academic libraries. The policies are presented in two formats. The first set of policies consists of the complete personnel policies of four libraries—one academic and three public. The second group of policies—organized by personnel topics such as selection of staff, working conditions, employee benefits, and so forth—includes selections from numerous libraries. The author justifies the inclusion of the four comprehensive policies by commenting that they "provide reasonably thorough coverage of issues associated with the particular type and size of library" though none of this relevant information is provided to the reader. Indeed, no information on the libraries that