Recent Publications

BOOK REVIEWS

Extended Library Education Programs: Proceedings of a Conference Held at the School of Library Service, Columbia University, 13–14 March 1980. Richard L. Darling and Terry Belanger, eds. New York: School of Library Service, Columbia University, 1980. 150p. $6 (postpaid). (Available from: School of Library Service, Columbia University, 516 Butler Library, New York, NY 10027.)

As is the case with many professional conferences, the proceedings are doubtless more interesting to those who participated than to those who read them. While we all ought to be concerned about the issues raised at this one, I found the document somewhat disappointing. Those who spoke at the conference are worthy of our respectful attention: Lloyd H. Elliott, the president of George Washington University, Deans Richard Darling, Robert Hayes, Edward Holley, Russell Bidlack, Charles D. Churchwell, Katherine H. Packer, and Jane Anne Hannigan. I regret that Robert Taylor and Pauline Atherton were not included.

President Elliott tried to provide the framework in which the papers were presented. What he said was not new to most of us, though he said it well enough. Like most university presidents, he talked from the general which he knew, to the specific of which he knew rather less, but did succeed in reminding his colleagues of the broader issues with which higher education must contend now and in the future.

The conference participants were concerned, properly, with the quality of their students, the training they get, their job opportunities, their salaries, the impact of rapidly changing library practices on them, and what we who hire them do with them and for them. All are legitimate concerns of deans and faculties of library schools.

But the papers as a whole seem to be more

concerned with the mechanics of library education, and specifically, of course, whether or not library schools should move to two-year programs and, if so, how such programs would improve the individual graduate. I was pleased to learn of their concern for the need for providing research experience, but there seemed to be too little critical, serious discussion about what that should encompass. In view of what passes for research in much of the literature of the profession, this is a serious matter, and I felt a certain impatience with the discussions. I was reminded of Lucy Van Pelt's answer to the old question of how many angels can dance on the head of a pin: "Three if they're fat; six if they're thin." One can count on Lucy, if not always on our colleagues.

By and large, the participants accounted themselves well, but I found myself wondering if the conference was really necessary. As the administrator of a large library system undergoing the trauma of dramatic change (as is increasingly common around the country), I think this distinguished group of men and women might better have spent their time asking whether library education is trying to be all things to all people, whether we have too many library schools, whether we are producing too many librarians, whether we should actively recruit Ph.D.s from other disciplines, whether or not we are stressing the mechanics and housekeeping functions of librarianship too much, and even, perhaps, whether or not the doctorate in librarianship is a defensible degree for those in practice. Fair is fair, they did a bit of this.

Within their agreed-upon charge to themselves, they might have asked *us* more hard questions: Why do we use librarians in lending-service operations, in reserve rooms, in routine ordering and cataloging of current trade books, or in many administrative positions in our libraries? Will two-year programs give us librarians with computer skills, with sophisticated management skills, and with political skills applicable to academia?

Obviously the time spent on securing a graduate degree does and will affect what is learned, and resolving that may be a necessary first step toward more extensive curriculum revision. If our library schools are simply going to extend the traditional course offerings, with a soupçon of research thrown

in, they will not be addressing the basic problems of either library or information science. At present, leadership in the profession is coming from a few of those in charge of our great research libraries, from the developing networks and consortia, and from the information industry itself, not primarily from the nation's library schools.

Jane Anne Hannigan's summary chapter is perhaps the best part of this document. She asks, both directly and indirectly, many of the questions the participants touched on all too briefly (if at all), one of which I can answer: "Yes, Ms. Hannigan, we are still 'creating serfs to the faculty' of our institutions." In part this is because library education is simply not demanding enough, not tough enough (whatever its length), and in part because we are having to hire those who are not librarians (and pay them more, I might note) to get the work done that is now necessary in academic libraries.

This conference was useful in that this group of men and women publicly began addressing some of the profession's most serious problems, if only by indirection. It was but a tentative first step, and as the Council on Library Resources, and the Association of Research Libraries become increasingly concerned about library education, as they are, we may at last develop the kind of symbiotic relationship we need between academic libraries and the library schools that, to date, has at best existed only in form, not substance. All libraries and librarians will be better for it.—*Stuart Forth, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park.*

An Information Agenda for the 1980s: Proceedings of a Colloquium, June 27–28, 1980. Ed. by Carlton C. Rochell. Chicago: American Library Assn., 1981. 154p. $6.50. LC 80-28634. ISBN 0-8389-0336-3.
The Future of the Printed Word: The Impact and Implications of the New Communications Technology. Ed. by Philip Hills. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1981. 172p. $25. LC 80-1716. ISBN 0-313-22693-8.

Here are two books that command attention because they offer just enough basic information and speculation on some of the forces affecting librarianship to stimulate thought. Foremost is a splendid volume containing the proceedings of the invitational colloquium entitled *An Information Agenda for the 1980s,* held at New York University in June 1980 under the auspices of the American Library Association. It brings to the general reader and librarian alike a rich vein of opinion on perceptions of the information issues presumably emerging during this decade. The papers selected for publication include those by Lewis M. Branscomb, Douglas Cater, Benjamin M. Compaine, Robert Wedgeworth, Martin M. Cummings, and Dan Lacy. Especially noteworthy is an excellent introductory essay by Carlton C. Rochell, which highlights and integrates the major elements of the papers and discussions heard at the colloquium.

The advent of information processing on a large scale through electronically based technology raises a host of questions that must be addressed by all segments of society, as well as by leaders in government, communications, education, and library service. For this reason, the publication of these thought-provoking papers serves to identify pertinent issues, which, taken as a whole, outline the potential impact of a fundamental change that society is just beginning to experience. Branscomb aptly describes what might be the scope of such change during the next hundred years in the first paper, "Information: The Ultimate Frontier," and then narrows his focus in "Library Implications of Information Technology." Clarity of expression and keen insight enable him to convey a view of the issues associated with the electronic libraries of the future in a manner that makes them easy to comprehend. Cater treats what could be the central issue of the topic in his paper, "Human Values in the Information Society," when he shifts attention to the possible effects of new technology on mankind. He states, "It is past time that we begin to measure with greater sophistication and then to ponder more deeply the changes in society being wrought by the way we gather, transmit, and employ information. We are already well into this revolution and remarkably few people give systematic thought to its consequences for good or ill."

Compaine's paper, "Shifting Boundaries in the Information Marketplace," summarizes the variety of information systems available now and contemplated during this decade and provides examples of how they may be