BOOK REVIEWS

Key Papers in Information Science. Edited by Arthur W. Elias. Washington, D.C.: American Society for Information Science, 1971. 223 p. $6.00.

When I re-read the articles making up this volume for the purpose of writing this review, a strong feeling of nostalgia welled up. As a reader who has lived through the years of speculation, exploration, experiment, development, and debate that they embody, I couldn't help but feel again the spirit of excitement that I and others felt at the time. These are indeed "key papers," and it's valuable to have them together. Oh, of course some names are missing and are missed—Mooers, Taube, Fairthorne, Perry and Kent, Bar-Hillel, Bush, Shaw—but enough of them are here to give a full flavor of the times. The question is whether, as a collection, this set of papers has value beyond nostalgia. Before turning to that question, however, let's see what they consist of.

The volume groups nineteen papers into four categories: (1) Background and Philosophy, (2) Information Needs and Systems, (3) Organization and Dissemination of Information, and (4) Other Areas of Interest. The first includes papers by Borko, by Shera, and by Otten and Debons that attempt to define information science, its relationship to librarianship, and its potential as an independent discipline. The second includes papers by Weinberg, by Murdock and Liston, by Taylor, by Parker and Paisley, and by Kertesz that outline the purposes and functions of information transfer, especially for the sciences. The third includes papers by Doyle, by Fischer, by Conner, and by Rees that present some of the techniques which have been developed for handling, organizing, and presenting information—especially mechanized ones such as KWIC indexes, automatic indexing and abstracting, and SDI. The final section presents a potpourri of topics: a paper by Lipetz on information storage and retrieval, one by De Gennaro on library automation, one by Garvin on natural language, one by Borko on systems analysis, and one by Heilprin on technology and copyright.

The defined purpose of this collection is to serve students and instructors in introductory courses in information science, by making these key papers readily available as assigned readings. They indeed are useful readings, and the organization imposed on them by the editor, Elias, adds greatly to their usefulness, making them far more than a simple chronological listing.

Despite this, however, I must confess that, as the instructor in an introductory course in which we used the *Key Papers* for the purpose for which it was intended, it fell short of meeting the needs. Since then, I've tried to evaluate why.

Recognizing that the difficulties may have been due to the style of the instructor and the form of the course, the fact is that any collection of readings, valuable though they individually may be, has many deficiencies. I suppose they can all be summed up as follows: a collection of papers has the appearance of a book without being a book. It lacks congruity; it lacks balance; it lacks inherent structure, in contrast to that which is imposed; it lacks a theme or point to be made; it lacks a consistent style. As a sometime publisher, as an editor of a series of books, as a reviewer of prospective manuscripts I have felt that these things are as important in evaluation as substance and content.

Beyond this, a more important fact is that these papers, "key" though they are, represent the past, not the present. An introduction to information science requires reading assignments in the work of today, not just those of historical importance.

On the other hand, the fact remains that these are important papers, ones with which students should become familiar—and not simply for historical purposes, and that most instructors and classes should find this a useful volume.

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