BOOK REVIEWS

Case Studies in Library Computer Systems, by Richard Phillips Palmer. New York: R. R. Bowker, 1973. 214p. $10.95.

Surely one of the most annoying and disappointing aspects of the literature of library automation is the complete lack of uniformity or standards for reports of individual accomplishments. Thus one reads the continuing stream of reports of automated processes in individual libraries with only the remotest idea of which of the projects described are actually operating, which are in the process of being implemented, and which are merely proposals that still exist exclusively in the minds of their creators.

In this volume, Richard Palmer has brought together a number of descriptions of operating systems, upon which he has imposed his own standards of presentation. In all, six circulation, eight serials, and six acquisitions systems are described; in each case the description is divided into six parts. First, in a section entitled "Environment," the library, its collections, and its users are briefly described. Some idea is provided of the library's total budget, or at least its materials budget, and unusual features of the library are given. Next, the objectives of the automated system are stated, generally with some indication of what prompted automation to be considered and what features of the previous manual system were less than satisfactory. A section entitled "The Computer" describes the hardware used in some detail (and this information is summarized in a table at the end of the book), and the next section, "The System," gives a lengthy and detailed description of how the system works. The last section in each case is devoted to observations by Palmer, indicating the significance to the library of the automated system, and often pointing out problems that have been noted.

The least satisfactory section of the book is the final chapter, "Summary and Observations," in which Palmer lays out the stated costs of each system in such a way that they may be directly compared, even though he knows the figures have been derived in various manners and are therefore not directly comparable. Palmer's warning to the reader that "unit costs . . . should not be compared without noting that they were not computed on a standard basis" makes even more mystifying his arrangement of those costs in tabular form. A second area that seems weak is the suggestion that the book constitutes an effective rebuttal to the criticisms of Ellsworth Mason. It seems unlikely that anything short of a very thorough systems analysis, showing all of the problems, alternatives, costs, and benefits of both manual and machine systems, will satisfy Mason.

Despite these very minor reservations, the book is well worthy of study. It presents, in nontechnical language, some of the most carefully and honestly described systems descriptions to be found in the literature, suggesting by example that many of the individual applications described in the journals, including *JOLA*, might well be better than they are.

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Information Systems, Services and Centers, by Herman M. Weisman. New York, N.Y.: Wiley-Becker-Hayes, 1972. 265p. $10.95. ISBN: 0-471-92645-0.

Weisman states that his work "is not a text on automated information technology," and mechanization is pretty well dismissed in one page of critical discussion. Ellsworth Mason is singled out for his "amusing, facetious and bitter account of a [*sic*] melancholy experience at mechanization." Use of automated services for information work is covered in less than a page.

The work *is* supposed to be a university-level text and "reference source" on "the practices of information transfer and use" on the "retailer" level. It is almost entirely limited to industrial and government scientific and technical information services. Libraries are defined in passing as a "specific type of information system . . . largely limited with some few excep-

tions to the passive repository function. . . ." However, "if the organization has a library, consultation with the librarian and use of his mechanisms for acquisition and purchase are advisable." It is also suggested that acquisitions are "recommended by the systems advisory committee . . . selected and purchased by the director of the information system and the documentation unit head," and the on-order file is maintained as a list (to be distributed monthly, perhaps) and in card form. The section on cataloging is equally instructive in advising that the acquisition process has provided "subject" as one of three elements needed for descriptive cataloging.

The book swings dizzily back and forth from this Lilliputian (or is it Laputan?) perspective to the more Olympian outlook suggested by a seventeen-page appendix which is the text of a charter for the United Engineering Information Service with an expected annual budget of $1.2 million. It also seesaws from the uselessly general to the exquisite detail of an operations manual with hardly a pause for breath. We are told at the start of the chapter on "Documentation Practices—Information Services" that it "is more efficient to provide [information dissemination services] than to have individuals scurrying about searching for information." A summary of the "procedural flow" follows immediately: "1. . . . All requests and inquiries no matter how received or to whom addressed are logged and assigned a control number. 2. . . . The head of Inquiry Services is responsible for monitoring all requests and inquiries. . . . All incoming requests are entered on the Inquiry Form. . . ." Most examples appear to be drawn from the author's experience as manager of Information Services, National Bureau of Standards. Some are useful.

Strauss' *Scientific and Technical Libraries: Their Organization and Administration* was another Wiley-Becker-Hayes volume issued during the same year. It is impossible to avoid imagining the publisher's marketing division people counting the respective memberships of the Special Libraries Association and the American

Society for Information Science as distinct markets for the two works. However, the first three-quarters of Weisman's work is a duplication distinguished from Strauss mainly by the shallowness of its coverage and the poverty of its prose. Weisman's only notable contribution is thirty pages about information analysis centers, which might be worth a school reading assignment.

The assignment will be at some risk, depending on students' toleration for such words as "essentialness," "beneficialness," "collaborationists," and such phrases as "parameters of data points," as in "An indexed bibliography becomes a more useful document, since it can indicate to a user exactly the type of data contained as well as parameters of data points."

"Relevance," as Weisman notes, "is not always synonymous with competence."

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Knowing Books and Men; Knowing Computers, Too, by Jesse H. Shera. Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1973. 363p. $13.50. ISBN: 0-87287-073-1.

The only clumsy thing about this book is its pretentious title, which not only gives little indication of the book's contents but is discordant with the lucid and vigorous style of the writing. KBAM;KC,T is a selection of writings and speeches by Dr. Shera, done between 1931 and 1972, all but one previously published. But only a few are reprinted unchanged; most have undergone revision to some significant extent, and one has been almost doubled in length in revision. Even the oldest papers are not unduly "dated," and the author's reflections on the use and abuse of computers in libraries are as timely now as when first written.

The twenty-nine papers published here are presented under six headings, each representing an area of librarianship in which Dr. Shera has been a major influence: philosophy of librarianship, library history, reference work in the library, documentation, the academic library, and library education. Most of *JOLA*'s readers, it is hazarded, will find

the section on documentation of most interest.

Reviewing *KBAM;KC,T* is no fit occasion for attempting to evaluate Jesse Shera's contributions to librarianship. He is established, and this selection from his writings contains many of his important and influential papers and others, inevitably, less weighty. Throughout, however, they bear Shera's characteristic combination of clarity, intelligence, vision, and a forthrightness bordering on truculence, the mix spiced judiciously with Attic salt.

In a disarming preface Shera suggests that the collection may be "more of an addition to library shelves than to library literature." Be that as it may, many of the writings were originally published in somewhat obscure journals, and it is helpful to have them gathered in this convenient form.

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A Library Management Game: A Report on a Research Project, by P. Brophy, M. K. Buckland, G. Ford, A. Hindle, and A. G. Mackenzie; with an Appendix by L. C. Guy. (University of Lancaster Occasional Papers, no.7) University of Lancaster Library, 1972. 90p. £1.00. ISBN: 0901699-14-4.

In the context of the need for greater managerial expertise in libraries, the state of managerial education in library schools, and the place of games in this education, the authors describe in this document the development of a simplified probablistic model of a loan and duplication system. While it is perhaps the novelty of concept exhibited by the game which first attracts attention, closer examination reveals that the game is but the vehicle upon which is carried a far-ranging analysis of the state of library management.

A dynamic model utilizes three input variables—loan period, titles bought, and duplicates purchased—and three output measures—satisfaction level, document exposure, and collection bias—of the effective manipulation of the former within the constraint of budget to illustrate complex interactions within a library system. Sufficient flexibility (e.g., variation of loan periods according to popularity of volumes and/or status of user) enables different policies to be selected to effect the stated objectives of the player (library "manager"). Comparison of selected outputs illustrates that while choosing and implementing policies may be simple (a "game editor" interprets a player's decisions to the computer), judging their merits is not. Policy (L) decreases collection bias at the expense of average document exposure per issue, while policy (Q) has the opposite effect, for similar costs and total issues; policy (T) increases satisfaction level and decreases collection bias in comparison with policy (Q), at a cost of 8,000 units of expenditure. Evaluation of the policy decision rests on a value judgment (as in the real world).

Although description of the game and probabilities upon which it is based occupies a considerable portion of the volume, the authors considered not only the practicability of such a game but also its usefulness in teaching and cost of utilization.

An appendix devoted to an in-depth study of education for library management concludes that: in Britain and, to a lesser extent, the United States this aspect of library education needs considerable strengthening; games such as that described are most suited to specialized courses for experienced librarians but there is a place for similar ones in first-level courses; and a larger proportion of the profession needs to comprehend the concepts put forward in this and other studies before better management techniques will be applied to libraries.

This volume is an important contribution to the literature of library management, illustrating that the effect that computers can have on the practice of librarianship goes far beyond the mere substitution of machines for clerical workers.

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