

research library should have to wait two years to read Fussler's excellent paper.—*Rolland E. Stevens, Ohio State University Libraries.*

The Great EB

The Great EB; the Story of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. By Herman Kogan. [Chicago]: University of Chicago Press [1958]. 339p. \$4.95.

When John Lehmann, in *The Whispering Gallery*, writes briefly of his great-grandfather and the firm which launched *Chambers's Encyclopaedia*, readers for whom reference books are stock-in-trade may well wish for a fuller account. Upon reflection, however, one realizes that the history of an encyclopedia is perhaps less suited to Mr. Lehmann's literary style and talents than to more journalistic abilities such as are exhibited in Herman Kogan's *The Great EB*. That is not to depreciate Mr. Kogan's abilities, for they are considerable. In this story of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* he presents a colorful and highly readable narrative of the birth and development of one of our great reference tools.

With a liberal sprinkling of anecdotes and interesting sidelights, Kogan traces the progress of the *Britannica* from its Edinburgh beginnings and the labors of William Smellie to its present big-business status with editors employing the mechanical assistance of "the Robot." He tells of the men who guided the encyclopedia's destinies; of the financial crises which so often attended a change of ownership; and of the EB's affiliation with the *London Times*, with Cambridge University, with Sears, Roebuck and Company, and with the University of Chicago. He has contrived to make the account move smoothly and rapidly from edition to edition, relating the growth of the enterprise to the events of the times, and suggesting the changes and advances which influenced that growth.

The whole is spiced with names of famous contributors and quotations from their articles and correspondence; with excerpts from reviews of and contemporary comments on the various editions. If there are moments when the reader feels unduly

"quoted at," he should remember that the opportunities for quotation must have been boundless: Mr. Kogan has undoubtedly exercised admirable restraint.

Only in the final chapter, "The Modern EB: How It Is Sold," does the reader's interest flag. Since sales methods and promotions figure prominently in the narrative, it is altogether appropriate that modern methods, too, be considered. It is unfortunate, however, that this last chapter is padded out with banal sales stories and bits of company lore, proving an anticlimax to an otherwise absorbing history.

The work includes a bibliography which lists books, magazine and newspaper references, as well as unpublished master's essays. Regrettably, a single explanatory note in the bibliography is made to suffice for all editions and subsidiary publications of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Thus, for the work under consideration we are denied immediate access to dates and other bibliographical details—information not readily gleaned from an indexed text. A full bibliographic listing (or a tabular summary) of all the editions and subsidiaries of the *Britannica* would have been a very desirable and valuable addition to the book.—*Eugene P. Sheehy, Columbia University Libraries.*

Information Indexing and Subject Cataloging

Information Indexing and Subject Cataloging: Alphabetical: Classified: Coordinate: Mechanical. By John Metcalfe. New York: Scarecrow Press, 1957. 338p. \$6.75.

"It is not easy for writer or reader to disentangle the entanglements of indexing with false science, vain philosophy and misused or unnecessary logic, and doing so makes for controversy and criticism, of the locusts who have eaten the years. But for them these studies would hardly have been needed . . . and indexing and its students would be better off if there were few if any other authorities accepted now, besides Dewey and Cutter of 1876, and Kaiser and Hulme of 1911. But others are accepted as authorities, and with their panaceas, conflicting metaphysics, inconsistent jargons,

different logics and competing followers, they must be got into our systems, or out of them. Here is an attempt to reconcile what is reconcilable, to reason what is reasonable, to reject what is not."

The author of this volume, John Metcalfe, has been Principal Librarian of the Public Library of New South Wales since 1942 and is one of Australia's library leaders, currently president of the Library Association of Australia, and, since 1944, chairman of its Board on Examination. He has sought to accomplish his purpose primarily through a careful study of the principal writings on providing subject access to information from Crestadoro's *Art of Making Catalogues* (1856) to the memoranda of Great Britain's Classification Research Group (1955 and 1956).

Metcalfe says that the fundamental questions which he raises and "in some way" answers are these: (1) Are classifying and indexing done for "subjects" or for "information on subjects"? (2) What are the differences between the "simple" subjects identified by names or by classification numbers and the "complex" subjects or concepts or subject relations of some documents? (3) What is the difference between subject specification and subject qualification? (4) What are the differences between the classification of literature for its generic survey and the indication of literature for specific reference? (5) Which of these methods of subject control is the more useful? (6) Do general classification systems offer practicable or possible organization either for general or for special subject bibliography? (7) What is the potential universal bibliography? and (8) Can centralized cataloging serve for differing purposes or methods of indexing, i.e., for both the classified and the alphabetic-specific catalog? The answers to these questions are important determinants of the purposes of information indexing and therefore of the methods chosen to achieve them.

Whether Metcalfe has reconciled the reconcilable, reasoned the reasonable, or even answered in some way his fundamental questions is a moot point. He has examined at length and in a variety of contexts and relationships the questions he raises. He has devoted considerable discussion to the ma-

ajor extant classification schemes and their authors or advocates; he has considered the structure and content of general subject heading lists (ALA, Sears, LC), and he has given attention to such matters as indexing for special purposes, chain indexing, synthetic classification, mechanical selection, and coordinate indexing. In all of these except in systems built upon alphabetical specific entry he finds little of use for achieving the real purpose of information indexing which is the *indication* of information, not its *communication*, as he perceives it. Indeed, he shows little patience with classification as a method of information indexing at all since, in his view, it is only really effective in providing for literature survey and not for literature specification. And such generic survey, he opines, is a much lesser need than the need for specific reference.

From his inquiry he does offer some conclusions which can only be suggested here in their most general terms. Much confusion in our thinking about purposes and methods of subject analysis have arisen because we continue to mix up the classing and indexing of *subjects* with the classing and indexing of *information* on subjects or some aspect of these subjects, and because we have not distinguished clearly between the naming of the subject, information about which we are indexing (*subject specification*), and the expression of some property or qualification of a subject which is not a species or kind of that subject but about which there may be information to be indexed or classified, such as its history (*subject qualification*). Since it is not a legitimate purpose of indexing to communicate information but only to indicate it, our contemporary concern with finding ways to express the complex subjects and subject relationships to be found in literature is not only unnecessary and confusing; it is futile. Simple or complex subjects can always be named; the expression of these names may be accordingly simple or complex. And he returns frequently to a favorite thesis, that we have reached our present confused state in thinking about and practice in indexing and classification because we have not understood clearly what Dewey, Cutter, Kaiser, and Hulme said, and the systems we have

built upon these bases reflect the imperfections in our understanding. Universal bibliography is an impossibility and therefore an unrealistic goal, and there is no satisfactory or economical method by which centralized cataloging can be made to serve simultaneously for the construction of a classified subject catalog and an alphabetic one.

The author's observations and criticisms are interesting, frequently provocative, often devastating, and occasionally polemical, and his opinions are original. But what he writes is essentially his own interpretation of what others have written or said—or meant to say or write. He offers no objective evidence or studies to support his opinions and interpretations, and the examples he chooses to justify or emphasize his conclusions are usually isolated or quite specific and not necessarily characteristic of the whole system from which they have been extracted.

This reviewer is sympathetic to Metcalfe's objective in seeking clarity and simplicity in the increasing obscurity of writing on "information retrieval" and is attracted by the relative simplicity of Metcalfe's conclusions, especially since Metcalfe holds easy effective use to be the ultimate criterion in judging any method for information indexing. But he is skeptical of these conclusions because Metcalfe is guilty of the same sin of which he accuses others. His book is not clear, and not being clear, difficult to evaluate for what it is.

This is a most difficult book to read. The author's sentences are involved and complex and the resulting style is complicated further by vagaries in punctuation and an aversion for the comma. His words and his sense are marred by his vacillation between the serious and the comic, the formal and the flip, and by his fondness for metaphor and quotation—"the years the locusts have eaten," "Hope springs eternal, and forever finds new springs." The language he uses to dispose of those with whose ideas he does not agree is often intemperate and more appropriate for a political campaign in which an opponent's record must be discredited and his intelligence disparaged than it is for the deliberative serious discussion which Metcalfe's objectives presume. And the organization of the whole book, in which each paragraph is numbered and cross

reference to and from in the text is made by paragraph number, leads to frustration for the reader, who must, if he is to understand, check each such reference to discover to what discussion precisely a paragraph number refers. ("What Jevons meant or did not mean is discussed in 1059-62, and Shera in 409-10, 415, 429, and 1041-4.") The material, therefore, seems poorly organized, for the whole of any particular criticism can be pieced together only by joining the numbered paragraphs which may be scattered throughout the ten chapters of the text. That these numbers have been used "for reference purposes so that the book's organization and apparatus could be completed before its printing and final paging in a place far away from its writing" is small consolation and inadequate justification for a method which interferes with communication of the author's ideas. The index, incidentally, is to paragraph numbers rather than pages.

Even the author's method of documentation is unusual. A "reference list" gives, by paragraph numbers, the citations to support, clarify, or explain the contents of those paragraphs. But these citations are to an author's surname, the number assigned to the particular work of that author in a separate "literature list" of 114 items, and the pages referred to within that work. This machinery does accomplish the purposes of documentation, but it does so in a curiously indirect way and adds further to the reader's difficulty in comprehending and evaluating the work.

Composition of the text was done by typewriter using a book-face type, and the printing, presumably, by photolithography. The margins are unjustified, the spacing regular and unvaried, the proofreading imperfect, and the pages unrelieved by any variation in typography, spacing, or distribution of black and white. Unquestionably the book was produced economically, but it is monotonous and ugly in appearance. And monotony and ugliness are also deterrents to understanding.

This is too bad, for the author has some interesting points to make, and he deserves to have them well-understood and fairly evaluated. In his introduction he says that "the reader must be joint author of what-

ever he really understands." So he must—for any book. But for this one, the author and the publisher have so conspired to impose added burdens on what, in this context, is normal joint authorship that few readers are likely to make the attempt—or to survive it successfully if they do.—*Carlyle J. Frarey, School of Library Science, University of North Carolina.*

Early English Serials

Serial Publication in England before 1750.

By R. M. Wiles. Cambridge: University Press, 1957. 391p. 52s.6d.

This work has special value for librarians (for whom it was originally intended "as a mildly interesting note") and also for the literary historian who will discover it to be a treatise on an important phase of English literary history which had not hitherto been fully explored. In a very real and significant sense, however, it is a notable contribution to the history of adult education; in fact, the author, who is professor of English at McMaster University, believes that the chief value of his book is as an account of a previously unrecognized stimulus to increased literacy among the English middle and lower classes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The text is complemented by a "Short-title Catalogue of Books Published in Fascicules before 1750." Over three hundred titles on almost every conceivable subject are listed in this bibliography which should be invaluable to the rare book librarian. So profitable in general were these weekly or monthly inexpensive parts that serial publication of books became competitive big business, the story of which is traced from

1678 to 1750. Only a score of titles were published in this manner prior to 1725; the boom really began in 1732; and after 1750 Professor Wiles contents himself with a number of highspots such as the success enjoyed by Smollett, Thackeray, and Dickens.

The parallel with today's pocketbooks does not escape Professor Wiles's attention. He points out that nowadays quite ordinary people are able and willing to buy excellent books, reasonably well printed, at lower prices than are charged for a haircut, a good meal, or the movies; just as two centuries ago the books in parts were sold principally to those who did not make up the "polite" world.

For a bibliographical study the book is unusually well written; at times it even makes entertaining reading—witness the chapter heading "The Law and the Profits." It covers all aspects of this type of serial publication: historical, bibliographical, printly significant is that this mode of publishing, promotion, and distribution. The conclusion summarizes the author's philosophy: "What makes the issuing of fascicules realtion made it possible and easy for middle- and lower-class Englishmen to buy and read books. That is an admirable habit. It is a habit which not even television and other astounding twentieth-century diversions have been able to break."

With its emphasis on reading habits and methods of publishing, the book is a most welcome addition to the librarian's and the library school student's professional reading. At the same time it will be most useful to the rare book librarian and the bibliographer. It should be in college and university libraries generally.—*Andrew D. Osborn, University of Sydney Library.*

INFORMATION, PLEASE: Professor Roger L. Brooks, Department of English, College of Engineering, University of Colorado, Boulder, wants to locate all extant copies of the following books by Matthew Arnold: *The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems* (1849), *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems* (1852), and *Poems* (1853). He would like to know about any inscriptions and the names of previous owners, if available.

John B. Kaiser, School of Library Service, Columbia University, would like to locate the text in which the late Jacques Loeb, eminent biologist, referred to the library as "the essential to discovery." He believes that the comment was made at a library dedication (possibly in New England) prior to April 1926 but within a few years of that date.