

in depth in its areas of strength; and, if necessary, areas of collecting would be assigned.

If this comes about, then those who attended the Boston Conference of 1974 will be able to say to their grandchildren some day that they were there when history was about to be made.—*Henry Scholberg, Librarian, Ames Library of South Asia, University of Minnesota.*

Blake, Norman F. *Caxton: England's First Publisher*. London: Osprey, 1976. 220p. £7.00 (ISBN 0-85045-106-X)

The second half of the twentieth century affords many publishing coincidences. For instance, the appearance of this book coincides with the quincentenary anniversary of publishing in England. This anniversary was celebrated in London during September 1976 by a Caxton International Congress where the author, presently a Senior Lecturer of English Language at the University of Sheffield, was one of the main speakers.

This critical study of Caxton's publishing is long overdue; more than one hundred years have passed since the publication of William Blades' bibliographic study, *William Caxton: England's First Printer*. Actually, the similarity of Professor Blake's title reflects a change in contemporary scholarly emphasis since he relates the literary, as well as bibliographic, advances in Caxton scholarship. Incidentally, Blake's earlier work, *Caxton and His World* (1969), discusses the literary environment of the fifteenth century, and though that is partially duplicated here, the present volume also reports the technical aspects of publishing; so the two are complementary.

An historical chapter on Gutenberg's invention and subsequent lawsuits places printing in the fifteenth century for the novice. Then in the following three chapters Blake explores Caxton's early life and career. Blake raises the possibility that Caxton was born in Strood, Kent, but regarding a birthdate, he will only say "the limits of his date of birth are between 1415 and 1424." Caxton, we know, entered the mercer's trade and enjoyed a long successful career; however, according to Blake, we should not consider Caxton's late adoption

of printing as a break with his past. Earlier as a mercer, Caxton was undoubtedly dealing in luxury goods; thus, books were simply another item in his inventory. Here, Caxton's publishing venture is viewed as much a "commercial speculation" as a purely literary endeavor.

Having considered the necessary historical background, Professor Blake presents a lucid introduction to the practical aspects of "The Book and Its Production" in the late fifteenth century. Unfortunately, it is marred by several minor technical errors. For example, in his discussion of the *Eneydos*, Blake confuses sheet for leaf when he states "the first six sheets (A⁴A³) contain the prologue and table of contents" and page for leaf in an explanation of signatures, "if the first gathering by that letter is designated 'a', then the first page will be 'a1' the second 'a2', and so on." The bibliographer will immediately realize what Blake has done, but the novice may get the wrong impression of how a book is produced.

Readers will find the chapter on "Decoration and Ornament" an intriguing discussion of the usefulness of decorated borders, initial letters, and paragraph marks for dating Caxton's books. Usually scholars date Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* to 1478, but based on a carefully stated hypothesis involving typographic paragraph marks, there is a possibility, for Blake, that the first edition appeared in 1477. In addition, Blake mentions some solutions to the cryptic printer's device used by Caxton.

To some extent, the lack of scholarly apparatus limits the usefulness of this work. Only a selected bibliography is appended, and although the lack of footnotes tends to make the text more readable, the interested reader will have to search out appropriate supporting sources.

However, Professor Blake's contribution is the positing of Caxton's true position in early printing. Blake balances the historical and literary views and blends earlier writings into a single perspective, offering the reader a fascinating, insightful volume necessary for understanding Caxton and the publishing and book trades in England and the Low Countries during the fifteenth century.—*John Richardson, Jr., Graduate Li-*

brary School, Indiana University, Bloomington.

Kenney, Brigitte L., and Esteves, Roberto. *Video and Cable Communications: Guidelines for Librarians*. Based on a Report of the ALA Video/Cable Study Committee. Chicago: Information Science and Automation Division, Video and Cable Communications Section, American Library Assn., 1975. 84p. \$3.50.

This publication, a revision of a formal report submitted to ALA, provides a useful compendium of general information on the present status and future prospects of video and cable technology in libraries. The first two of the six chapters deal with the involvement of some 400 libraries. Chapter 3 covers video hardware and software in fairly general terms. Chapter 4 touches on cable regulations and franchising, and Chapter 5 deals with community education, organization, and resources. The last chapter is a checklist for librarians. The most useful section is Appendix A, providing perhaps the most complete annotated bibliography yet assembled in one publication.

For the untutored, this publication will provide an excellent generalized overview of what is involved when libraries make use of the new technology. Unfortunately, it is so generalized that it might be misleading to some. For instance, the statement is made that the new low cost of video equipment (a portable black-and-white camera-recorder combination available for about \$2,000) makes this equipment attractive to many libraries. One looks in vain, however, for any real data on staff time and training that must be expended to make the camera-recorder operational and effective. The items listed in the bibliography probably bring out the needed data; without such data in this publication, the impression is left that the use of video and cable technology in libraries is easy, inexpensive, and effective. We do not believe the editors intended such an impression.

The more than a year delay in publication of the guidelines has had a serious impact on its usefulness. It is considerably out of date in a very rapidly developing area. Librarians will do well to check the fine

bibliography for those items that will provide updated information in crucial areas, such as equipment specifications and costs, changes in FCC regulations, and technological developments.

This is an admirable first effort in a very new area. We can only hope that the guidelines will be updated regularly. Such effort would be most helpful to the profession.—*Gordon P. Martin, University Librarian, California State University, Sacramento.*

Chen, Ching-chih. *Applications of Operations Research Models to Libraries: A Case Study of the Use of Monographs in the Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine, Harvard University*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1976. 212p. \$17.50. (LC 75-28210) (ISBN 0-262-03056-X)

This work seems to confirm a widespread belief that excellent doctoral dissertations seldom translate into readable professional literature for the practitioner. Chen's work is admirable, the methodology and conclusions are sound, but the narrow scope of the subject and the unavoidable reliance upon jargon to discuss it will severely limit her audience.

The first of the book's three sections is basically a restatement and extension of the probabilistic models of circulation proposed by Morse. The theory is that while it is impossible to predict whether individual titles will or will not circulate, it is possible to predict the circulation behavior of subject classes of books on the basis of historical data. The average librarian will probably have to accept this proposition as an article of faith. One who has not read and understood Morse's *Library Effectiveness*, or who lacks a solid background in quantitative methods, will never make it through p.35. The models rest upon the assumption that book circulation is a random process, but this by no means commands universal agreement among the profession.

Section two reports in detail the author's successful attempt to apply the models, originally developed from a small data base at the MIT Science Library, to the Countway Library of Medicine. Sampling techniques were used to obtain historical circulation data for selected subject classes in