

and the demonstration that the society truly needed institutions to supply its citizens with books.

Along with the social libraries, the free-enterprise ventures that were the circulating libraries helped demonstrate the magnitude of that need, and both types of libraries helped delineate the characteristics of the demands. Kaser shows how the collections of the circulating libraries supplied a full range of subject materials during their early years but then modified their coverage as other libraries undertook responsibilities for some subjects. In particular, he attributes the heavy concentration upon popular fiction that Shera emphasizes as the primary characteristic of the circulating libraries to the reluctance of the public libraries to devote large proportions of their resources to supplying fiction.

Kaser reminds us that the circulating library was by no means replaced by the free public library, and he carries the story up to modern times when, he shows, the virtual deathblow was delivered, not by other libraries but rather by the advent of the paperback and, most importantly, television.

Kaser's treatment, then, adds to our knowledge and completes the story of the circulating library in ways not previously available. Although Shera's account is reasonably complete for New England up to 1850, Ditzion does not consider circulating libraries even as a part of his discussion of the schizophrenia of public librarians about supplying fiction in tax-supported institutions.

With this study, Kaser, professor at Indiana University Library School, adds to his already substantial body of work dealing mostly with publishers and other commercial ventures closely allied to librarianship. He follows the pattern of his previous publications in writing history of an old-fashioned sort. He tends to give very extensive detail, to multiply quite largely his accounts of quaint particulars, and to express himself in prose of an antique tinge. Bernard Dornin's library was "ill-starred" (p.67) though he does not tell us why, and school officials "animadverted darkly" (p.88) about immoral books.

The typical scheme of treatment is a long

passage of detailed description of individual circulating libraries followed by a summary that seeks to extract generalizations. Some will chafe at reading details that seem merely to illustrate characteristics that have been exemplified earlier. Yet the book covers the subject thoroughly and will need no successor. All in all, it is a pleasing work that surely merits a place in every library that seeks to record the history of American life and society.—W. L. Williamson, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*.

Lane, Michael, and Booth, Jeremy. *Books and Publishers: Commerce against Culture in Postwar Britain*. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1980. 148p. \$16.95. LC 79-3135. ISBN 0-669-03383-9.

Books and Publishers by Michael Lane draws a picture of contemporary publishing in Britain from the point of view of a sociologist. Professor Lane has impressive educational credentials, including Cambridge University, is presently teaching at the University of Essex, and has written extensively for the best-known sociological journals. His present book is the result of interviews with large numbers of publishing executives in three subsidized year-long research projects carried out from 1966 to 1975. This is not, however, a report of that research but rather the author's reactions to what he has learned. Methodology, other than to mention the interview technique, is not detailed, nor are totals and percentages of responses marshaled to bolster opinions. Lengthy quotations of publishers' points of view are given, but it is never explained whether these are from stenographic notes, tapes, or simply impressions written down after the fact.

The book basically develops two models of modern British publishing: the traditional publisher, and the modern publisher. The traditional publishers are described as the product of an establishment elite; mostly small houses, run by old publishing families faithful to their vocation as purveyors of high culture, despite unfavorable economic realities. Production and sales are necessary evils; the editor is supreme. These editors typically have public school and Oxbridge educations, belong to the same clubs, and are the intimates of their authors in literary

cliques—cultivated orchids in a literary greenhouse. They believe in the mystique of the book and the inspired genius of the author. Preferring to look back to the golden age of publishing from World War I to the 1950s, they view the radical cultural and economic changes of the present and future with abhorrence. While all this is changing, the image is persistent.

The modern publisher, on the other hand, stems from a much wider social background, works for a large firm, generally the result of mergers, and has sacrificed most of his autonomy to technical efficiency and the profit motive. The publishing decision is based less on the quality of the book than on the probable quantity of sales. At its most Orwellian, the book becomes indistinguishable from a bar of soap, and the author is paid to write the books needed to balance the list.

There is, of course, nothing new in all of this. The situation is much the same in this country, and librarians and teachers of publishing courses in library schools have long been concerned over these trends. The difference between this book and the typical book on publishing is mainly that this book is written by a sociologist rather than a publisher. The author is currently writing a book on British culture since 1930, and as publishing is an important gateway for the culture available to the public, he is greatly involved with this topic.

One of the problems of a book in sociology is the sometimes curiously circumlocutory prose style, which makes the uninitiated reader feel like a UN interpreter simultaneously translating the printed page into standard English usage. Regrettably, examples of this style are by their very nature too long to include here, but the style makes the brief, 129-page text seem much longer. Another stylistic peculiarity is the use of the feminine wherever the text requires the use of the impersonal pronouns "he, his, him." The author uses "she, her" as if sexism were all right in reverse.

Nevertheless the book presents a thoughtful and worthwhile study by a concerned and informed researcher. The author concludes that "the picture of modern publishing is grim" (p.128) and indeed "British publishing is gravely ill". (p.128). Traditional

publishers wallow like dinosaurs in the sloughs of their own inadequacies, while their modern gotta-sell-soap successors have shortcomings equally grave. As the author offers no alternatives, the book should be an excellent springboard to discussions of the problem by sociologists, librarians, and publishers as to the future of book publishing. By the same token it should be of value to libraries serving the same groups.—*Budd L. Gambee, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.*

Stokes, Roy. *Michael Sadleir, 1888–1957*. The Great Bibliographer Series, no.5. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1980. 154p. \$8.50. LC 80-11419. ISBN 0-8108-1292-4.

Books are tools that mediate our experience with reality. For example, reading books on the history of our profession may effectively balance the narrowness of our day-to-day scrutiny of library operations. In this instance, we have the opportunity to understand the role Michael Sadleir, best known as Trollope's bibliographer, played in influencing the direction of descriptive and analytical bibliography.

Following a format similar to the earlier four titles in this series, Roy Stokes, director of the School of Librarianship at the University of British Columbia, introduces Sadleir by way of some pithy biographical information and then fifteen excerpts from Sadleir's own writing, each with a thoughtful but brief preface setting the context. One gets the feeling that Stokes truly admires his biographee and we should, too, for he opened the door to and legitimized the bibliographical study of the nineteenth century, particularly its popular inexpensive fiction. Several of the excerpts also reflect Sadleir's early but strong interest in writing his own novels of Victorian low-life, perhaps his best being *Fanny by Gaslight* (1940). Other excerpts are from his scholarly contributions—such pioneering works as *Excursions in Victorian Bibliography* (1922) and *XIX Century Fiction* (1951), as well as his investigations into publishers' bindings. These have earned him the appellation "great."

Readers interested in delving further into Sadleir will benefit from the last section, a chronological checklist of his work. More