

Recent Publications

BOOK REVIEWS

Bowen, Howard Rothmann. *The Costs of Higher Education: How Much Do Colleges and Universities Spend Per Student and How Much Should They Spend?* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1981. 287p. \$16.95. LC 80-8321. ISBN 0-87589-485-2.

This book was published nearly four years ago, but it still seems too little known by academic librarians who must cope with the problems of higher education costs and participate in the debate at their own institution on how to control them. This is unfortunate because the book is increasingly well known to academic administrators. It has been widely reviewed and frequently quoted by commentators on higher education, who admire it for the lucidity of its arguments and the succinctness with which they are stated. These are summarized in Bowen's revenue theory of cost and the five laws of higher educational costs which flow from it. The theory "is that an institution's educational cost per student is determined by the revenues available for educational purposes." Costs are not driven by a rational effort to match needs to outcomes, but by inputs: faculty-student ratios, number of library books, range of facilities and equipment, etc. From this theory five laws are derived:

1. "The dominant goals of institutions are educational excellence, prestige, and influence."
2. "In quest of excellence, prestige, and influence, there is virtually no limit to the amount of money an institution could spend for seemingly fruitful educational ends."
3. "Each institution raises all the money it can."

4. "Each institution spends all it raises."

5. "The cumulative effect of the preceding four laws is toward ever-increasing expenditure."

After reading these laws one might expect Professor Bowen to argue for greater economy in the deployment of educational resources and perhaps a reduction or reallocation in what is spent, but he does not. True, he believes that "the variance in unit cost among institutions is far wider than it should be in a democratic society" and "that institutions at the lower end of the distribution are inadequately financed" and "do not have the resources to provide an acceptable education." However, this is not to be construed as an argument for the "tearing down of the more affluent institutions" but for supporting and improving the less affluent which are "an indispensable part of the higher educational system." Indeed, Professor Bowen advocates increasing expenditure to raise the quality of deficient institutions to what he calls the Newman-Dewey standard. [Cardinal Newman is quoted approvingly as wanting an alma mater to number its children one by one; John Dewey is invoked as wanting every child to be educated as a wise parent would educate his own.] The total additional expenditure needed to achieve this result would be about eight to ten billion dollars (in 1980). This would increase total costs by 20 to 25 percent.

Bowen's vision of what this education should be is not narrowly utilitarian but based on the liberal learning ideal in which the communication and cultivation of values plays a dominant role. He be-

lieves that this country needs to give greater attention to the maintenance of its institutions and especially to higher education as a vehicle for educating people of all ages. A citizenry educated to its full potential in an aesthetic and cultural sense, as well as an intellectual one, is, for Professor Bowen, the best foundation of a productive and humane society.

This vision of education and society is one which most librarians are likely to share, but Professor Bowen's book is far more than a hortatory injunction to virtue. It is a trenchant analysis of cost trends in higher education and of the financial environment in which academic libraries exist. This environment has been one of increasing scarcity until recently and still is for many institutions. There is greater and greater pressure for economy in the allocation of resources. Libraries, in particular, have often been singled out as a part of the higher educational enterprise which demands greater scrutiny. The 80-20 rule (20 percent of a library's holdings satisfy 80 percent of a library's use) has been invoked by some as proof that librarians are not responding to either the realities of library usage or educational finance. Authors, such as George Keller in his *Academic Strategy*, believe that academe will see a new era of planning in which rational decision making and the measurement of performance will play a greater role.

Academic librarians are likely to be increasingly caught up in this struggle to define what the role of their parent institution is and how it should respond to changes in its environment. There will be a continuing battle between what Keller calls the incrementalists and the planners. The incrementalists largely eschew planning and rely on politics to gain a larger share of the institutional budget; the planners, without going to the extremes of operations researchers in attempting to quantify the measurement of institutional activity, believe in the desirability of matching inputs to outputs and in demanding some way to measure performance.

Librarians haven't been very good at devising output measures. Most of our measures are input measures of the number of

books we have, etc. We know very little of output measures, of how well we satisfy our users, for example. Admittedly, such output measures haven't been very useful up to now. As the economist, Jeffrey Raffel, observed, after a study of libraries, the welfare of libraries seemed to him more dependent on political than economic analysis. This is likely to remain true, but, given the current economic climate, academic librarians are also well advised to begin the development of output measures which they can use to manage libraries more effectively and to win from their administrations the finances which they need to do it well. Professor Bowen's book is not a blueprint for how to do this, but it does provide a lucid examination of the economic environment in which academic libraries exist. An appreciation of this is a necessary first step in understanding the context of library finance and in equipping librarians to participate in the continual debate about the proper allocation of resources that goes on on every campus.—Richard J. Talbot, *University of Massachusetts, Amherst.*

Gilreath, Charles L. *Computerized Literature Searching: Research Strategies and Databases.* Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1984. 188p. (Westview Special Studies on Information Science and Management) \$22. LC 83-23319. ISBN 0-86531-526-4.

Pritchard, Eileen, and Paula R. Scott. *Literature Searching in Science, Technology, and Agriculture.* Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1984. 184p. \$29.95. LC 83-18471. ISBN 0-313-23710-7.

Wilson, Concepción S. *Online Information Retrieval in Australian Academic Libraries.* Kensington, N.S.W.: School of Librarianship, Univ. of New South Wales, 1983. 362p. \$20.

The proliferation of electronically accessible information and its effect on librarianship has been discussed widely. One aspect of this is a debate concerning the ambivalent and uncertain future role for librarians as intermediaries in the process of online data base searching. Predictions waver between those based on hope-filled confidence in information organization