

# Recent Publications

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Lazerson, Marvin, Judith Block McLaughlin, Bruce McPherson, and Stephen K. Bailey.** *An Education of Value: The Purposes and Practices of Schools.* Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1985. 139p. \$24.95 LC 84-29382. ISBN 0-521-30339-7.

The continuing discussion about the nature and value of education in the United States has led to another book. This one, from four authors, is slim in volume and content. Its purpose and audience are not entirely clear. Its approach is primarily historical and its emphasis is on elementary and secondary education, chiefly as practiced in public schools in the United States.

"Where we have been and where we are likely to go form a continuous dialogue, involving our intellects and our passions," (p. 111) the four authors observe in a concluding chapter. In some detail, they explore the history of such curriculum developments as those emanating from the School Mathematics Study Group (SMSG) and resulting in such programs as *Man: A Course of Study* (MACOS). With the perspective of time, those efforts of the 1960s can be viewed and evaluated. Brought into being by the virtual panic about being behind in education that the launching of Sputnik caused in the United States, these efforts at curriculum change began at the national level and were based on national concerns. Their final failures to achieve universal adoption can be attributed to several characteristics: the commitment and enthusiasm they stimulated did not survive the several generations of communication necessary to bring them to every teacher

in every classroom; teachers were not sufficiently engaged in their development and were in fact reluctant to incorporate the new curricula; and, finally, the enduring conflict between striving for excellence and working toward equality in education practically did them in. Lazerson and his fellow authors return repeatedly to the theme of this conflict. All too often, efforts to achieve excellence are seen as threatening the prospects of providing equal opportunity.

Exploring another area in some detail, the authors present an interesting perspective of vocational education and conclude that "The debate about vocational education is not really about education for work. Rather, it is about the tendency of school programs to perpetuate social class, racial, and gender inequalities and about the tendency of vocational programs to demand less critical reasoning and fewer literacy skills than students have a right to expect" (p. 58-59). Their argument is well reasoned, and it is comparable to the statement they make about the incorporation of computers into educational programs. Computers are being provided more generously in schools in the more advantaged communities, and the large sums being spent on computer software suggest that one of the chief values of computers—stimulating creativity and discovery—may not be achieved. Further, since computers are associated with mathematics programs, where male students typically predominate, they may cause another "gender inequality" as identified by these authors.

Remarkable in a book by several authors are the integrity and clarity of the text.

There are occasional lapses, as when they refer to "a flair of unreality," or fail to attribute a comment to an initial, rather than to a secondary source. Their view of education is wholesome and holistic. Since all are or were (Bailey, evidently the mentor of the group of authors, is dead) associated with schools of education, their defense of teachers and clear recognition of their special problems are expected and understandable. Less clear, as noted earlier, is what the audience for this book may be. While one might wish to skim over some of the more detailed comments, the lay reader should find the book provocative and informative. The pity is that multiple copies of this book are likelier to be found on the shelves of academic or professional libraries rather than in the "Current and Choice" bins of public libraries where they would have a good chance to find the literate, concerned audience the book is meant to reach.—Peggy Sullivan, *College of Professional Studies, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb.*

***The Right to Information: Legal Questions and Policy Issues.*** Ed. by Jana Varlejs. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1984. 88p. \$9.95. LC 83-26750. ISBN 0-89950-097-8.

It is in the maelstrom of current controversy about access to published information that one can appreciate *The Right to Information*. *The Right to Information* is the published proceedings of the twenty-first annual symposium sponsored by the alumni and faculty of the Rutgers Graduate School of Library and Information Science held on April 1, 1982. The book consists of four essays and an extensive bibliography about right-to-information issues. The latter emphasizes such issues as access to government information, the right to privacy, private versus public sector competition in the dissemination of information, censorship, and the role of technology. What is remarkable is that this conference was held three years ago and the debate is as heated as ever.

"The Right to Privacy vs. the Right to Know" by Edward Bloustein is a balanced essay about the First Amendment. Irving Louis Horowitz' article on "Librarians, Publishers and the New Information Environment" discusses many issues includ-

ing copyright and publishing in an environment that is essentially electronic. The private sector is represented by Paul Zurkowski's contribution that focuses on the AT&T divestiture and the distribution of *Medline*, among other problems. The last essay by Shirley Echelman, "The Right to Know: The Librarian's Responsibilities" rounds out what must have been a truly stimulating conference.

The words "right to information" bring to mind two discrete concepts: the right to publish and the right to access published information. For the first of these concepts, consider the obstacles an idea must go through before making its way into print. From the conception of the idea to its printed form, editorial judgments, market conditions, and distribution networks must be faced. Once these obstacles have been overcome, there are other hurdles, mostly external and sometimes invisible. Pressure and special interest groups certainly fall into these categories. Then there is the governmental presence that controls book and magazine rates that are admittedly still preferential. It is also the government that passes regulatory actions such as copyright legislation that can have a major impact on the printed word.

Once this outer veneer is stripped away, there is the more direct threat of the censor. In the narrow sense, censorship is the hiring of an official censor to read manuscripts and pass judgment on their suitability for publication. Fortunately, there is little of this type of censorship in the United States. However, in the broader sense of the definition, censorship is any action taken to remove a printed item from its potential audience. When arguments of libel, obscenity, and national security are factored into the equation, it is a wonder anything makes it to print at all.

The second broad concept that comes to mind when the phrase "right to information" is mentioned, deals with the "right to access published information." Indeed, in the last decade this has become one of the key information policy issues. This is where *The Right to Information* becomes a valuable addition to the literature. The "free or fee" debate over accessing online databases is one such issue. There is also