

Recent Publications

BOOK REVIEWS

Bennett, George E. *Librarians in Search of Science and Identity: The Elusive Profession*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1988. 221p. \$25 (ISBN 0-8108-2075-7). LC 88-14679.

In an essay published shortly after his death, Jesse H. Shera wrote: "Twenty years ago, I thought of what is now called information science as providing the intellectual and theoretical foundations of librarianship, but I am now convinced that I was wrong" [Jesse H. Shera, "Librarianship and Information Science," in *The Study of Information: Interdisciplinary Messages*, ed. Fritz Machlup and Una Mansfield (New York: Wiley, 1983), p.383]. *Librarians in Search of Science and Identity* is Bennett's attempt to discover why librarianship was drawn to information science in the first place, and then why Shera withdrew his support for the convergence.

A reprint of Bennett's Ph.D. dissertation, this book is not for the casual reader. Reading it is reminiscent of peeling an onion: each time you think you have reached the core you encounter deeper layers and have to revise your expectations. The onion effect has to do with Bennett's approach to his subject. Eschewing a strictly historical treatment, Bennett instead adopts a complex method known as hermeneutics. This method is familiar to some people as a basic tool of Biblical exegesis, but it has also come to have a more generalized meaning as the interpretation of texts. In its generalized application, hermeneutics is used by literary scholars, philosophers, and sociologists, among others.

To oversimplify things drastically, hermeneutics is a dialectical or "circular" approach in which the investigator moves back and forth between text (a written product of some sort) and context (which may include historical findings or the results of sociological analyses) in order to achieve understanding of the text. In the present work, Bennett applies hermeneutics to Shera's 1983 essay (the "recantation" of information science). The context is provided under the aegis of the sociology of knowledge (how have librarians understood themselves?) and the sociology of science (how did information science develop?).

Bennett's hermeneutic circle is evident from the organization of his book. He sets the stage in the first chapter with a dialogue between himself and an interlocutor named Ishmael to present the problem and to introduce the concept of hermeneutics. Chapter 2 is a further methodological elaboration. In chapter 3 he identifies Shera's essay and various contemporaneous works by other persons as central to his query and selects from these works certain themes to pursue (the names *library science* and *information science*, how the two disciplines developed in relation to each other, theory versus pragmatism in librarianship, professionalization and the quest for status, and so on). By tracing citations and in-text references, Bennett determines that the origins of these themes derive from writings produced by librarians and documentalists (information scientists) prior to 1950. In chapter 4 he examines the pre-1950 historical contexts of librarianship and docu-

mentation (information science). Chapters 5 and 6 move the analysis of texts, historical events, and sociological interpretations forward to the 1970s. Ishmael reappears in chapter 7 for a final dialogue which reveals how Bennett's original expectations about the problem and his understanding of hermeneutics have been affected by the trip through time.

Bennett has, in effect, organized his dissertation in such a way that careful examination of the structure leads to greater understanding of the hermeneutical method. The structure itself instantiates (i.e., provides an example of) the investigative tool, so that both structure and substantive findings (textual and historical analyses, etc.) shed light on the research question. Needless to say, this is not an easy thing to pull off, but Bennett has done it very well indeed. Furthermore, he is—at least to this reviewer's knowledge—one of the few librarians, if not the only, to attempt this method. Most of our existing literature relies on more widely practiced forms of historical, sociological, or textual analysis.

Persons interested in the origins of library and information science, questions of social reproduction, professionalization theory, or education for librarianship should read this work not only for its methodological sophistication but also for the substantive findings that it presents. Some of the findings uphold work done by other investigators, for example, the sense of subordination common to the library profession. Other findings—for example, the fleshing out of Shera's gradual move over the course of a lifetime toward his "recantation"—represent a fresh understanding of perennial professional questions and are worthy of further study by others.

Normally a review of a Scarecrow Press dissertation-turned-into-book either begins or ends with a snide remark about the Scarecrow format and/or about authors who do not take the trouble to translate their theses out of "dissertationese" into the common tongue. Consider the remark made and immediately set aside as unimportant in the face of Bennett's achievement.—*Patricia Ohl Rice, Pennsylvania State University, University Park.*

Baughman, James C. *Trustees, Trusteeship, and the Public Good: Issues of Accountability for Hospitals, Museums, Universities, and Libraries.* New York: Quorum, 1987. 187p. \$35 (ISBN 0-8930-195-9). LC 86-25574.

Who controls the affairs of charitable organizations? Most would say trustees. However, according to James Baughman, trustees are only managers of a charitable institution's resources, which ultimately belong to the public. As trustees are charged with the task of running the charitable organization for the public good, he says, in the final analysis they are accountable to the public. Yet, occasionally in the past, trustees have demonstrated that neither they nor the public are aware that trustees are accountable to the general public for their actions.

Baughman says that nonprofit institutions constitute a remarkable 11 percent of the national wealth of the United States. Their direction is of great importance and concern to the whole of society because their failure would be of great consequence. Furthermore, he reminds his readers of part of a past court ruling which states that every dollar a charitable institution saves in tax levy becomes another dollar that other taxpayers must pay.

Baughman, who is a professor at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Simmons College in Boston, has written a lucid account describing the responsibilities trustees of charitable organizations have as found through various court cases. Having won the Research Roundtable's Research Competition Award for his work on knowledge control for interdisciplinary research, Baughman should be applauded once again for stepping beyond the usual bounds of librarianship. Writing in an easily readable style, the author cites court cases dealing with the fiduciary responsibilities of trustees in charitable institutions.

Baughman devotes separate chapters to such charitable ventures as hospitals, colleges and universities, museums, and school and public libraries. In each, he recounts events surrounding certain situations and cites data from court records and cases, newspapers, professional literature, and significant interviews to deter-