of several different hosts looking at nominal prices of databases, processing times and 'other cost-effectiveness considerations'.

The second section 'Counting the Costs' covers various aspects of this side of the cost-benefit equation. Again, the editor's introduction is easy to understand and well referenced. The other side of the cost-benefit equation is covered in the third section of the book: 'Assessing the Benefits'. This, incidentally, is the briefest section of the five. Does this mean that there are fewer benefits than costs, or is it simply that the experts in the field are all in agreement?

The dilemma in 'Facing a Dilemma' is concerned with budgets. The question is whether libraries, within their restricted budgets, can afford to introduce on-line search services and, if so, ought they to charge their clients? In this section, Cooper and DeWath describe a study that compares the costs of average searches when the search was free and when the user was charged. Also in this topic, Rice provides a useful review of this issue together with a discussion of the alternatives.

The final section of this book, 'Predicting Future Trends', is the one that taxed my imagination most. Bysouth's introduction was brief, useful and reasonably up to date. The reprints themselves, however, were originally printed in 1978, 1979, 1981 (x 3), 1982 and 1983. Barwise's 1979 article is even entitled (predictively at the time), 'The cost of literature search in 1985'! Even allowing for the fact that some of the predictions made in this section are concerned with the 1990s, I cannot see the relevance of publishing predictions on a future that is now significantly in the past.

The series editor, Blaise Cronin, writes: 'The *raison d'être* of this series is quite simple: to provide the reader with a clear understanding of the disciplinary base of information science.' This volume goes some way towards that objective. However, like the curate's egg, it is good in parts, and the reader has to work hard to break through the shell of poor presentation in order to reach the good parts.

Anthony Booth

Expert Systems in Libraries by Gibb, Forbes (ed.). Proceedings of a conference of the Library Association Information Technology Group and the Library and Information Research Group, November 1985. Published by Taylor Graham, 1986. ISBN 0 947568 10 7.

This is a slim 97-page paperback containing five of the papers presented at a one-day conference on Expert Systems in Libraries held in Birmingham on November 8th 1985. The conference, the aims of which were 'to provide an introduction to expert systems in general and to review the types of books that expert systems

in general and to review the types of books that expert systems are being applied to within the library and information science community', was organized jointly by the Library Association Information Technology Group and the Library and Information Research Group.

The topics covered in this book include an introductory overview of expert systems, software for developing expert systems and their possible application to reference work, classification and cataloguing. All the papers are well written and informative. Unfortunately, since the field has now moved on considerably, most of the references referring to the prices and availability of software are hopelessly out of date. For example, to name but two changes, ESP Advisor has now been superseded by Advisor 2 and Expert-Ease has been superseded by Super-Expert and more recently by Expert-Rule. However, despite this and the fact that much more detailed research has now been completed in the areas discussed in the book, I feel it is still well worth reading, particularly by those people wishing to venture into this relatively new and exciting field.

One final comment – what happened to the paper which was presented in a lively fashion at the conference by Professor Alty?

Anne Morris

Man-Computer Interfaces: An Introduction to Software Design and Implementation by Coates, R B and Vlaeminke, I. Published by Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford, 1987.

Recent studies in the US seem to indicate that up to 70 per cent of the costs of a software system are incurred after it has been written and deemed complete. The bulk of this cost can be explained by the need for modifications to the software and for staff training before the system can be used.

Many of the obstacles faced by those learning a new system can be attributed to the fact that the designers probably felt quite at home with computers and could well have been totally unaware of the difficulties that confront the average end-user. In order to avoid this problem, and to produce a system that is easy and perhaps even enjoyable to use, it is important to consider the 'human factors' perspective quite early on in the design of the system. Successfully adopted, such an approach can lead to a significant increase in productivity and to a corresponding reduction in the number of errors made by users.

The new book, *Man-Computer Interfaces: An Introduction to Software Design and Implementation*, by Coates and Vlaeminke, is an introduction to the human factors aspects of software system design.