

Review Articles

The Printed Book Catalogue in American Libraries: 1723-1900. By Jim Ranz. (ACRL Monograph No. 26) Chicago: ALA, 1964. vii, 144 p. Paper. \$3. (64-17055).

The scope of this study is broader than its title suggests; it is actually a concise history of cataloging in the United States to 1900. In fact, this slender volume comes close to being a terse history of American librarianship, thus demonstrating the central role that cataloging has played in library development. The great names in American librarianship of the period are all here, Charles C. Jewett ("probably the outstanding librarian of the day"), William F. Poole, Charles A. Cutter, Melvil Dewey, and William I. Fletcher, along with many of lesser stature. The contribution of each is told succinctly. Although biographical data are kept to a bare minimum, the personalities of these men are still clearly discernable.

Issued originally in 1960 at the University of Illinois as a doctoral dissertation comprising some 332 pages, this work has been effectively abridged to about one-third its original length. Although produced inexpensively from typewritten copy, the volume is attractively printed and is free from typographical errors. The author's style is brisk, his words are well chosen, and, though a predilection for library history is probably requisite to the choice of this book for Sunday afternoon reading, it deserves the attention of every responsible cataloger and library administrator. Its ninety-nine pages of text provide the over-all view of the evolution of the dictionary catalog that is essential not only to understand why cataloging is done as it is today, but also as a basis for considering alternatives to current practice. Noting the misplaced enthusiasm that greeted such an impractical innovation as the "Rudolph indexer" in the early 1890's should give one pause before waxing eloquent over a modern counterpart.

The treatment is in part chronological and in part topical, with a brief initial section on the European cataloging heritage

with which our colonial librarians began. The formulation of cataloging rules, the framing of subject headings, the evolution of corporate entry, and the long debate over the very purpose of a catalog are all treated with remarkable clarity. Although not purporting to trace the development of the card catalog, Dr. Ranz has, nevertheless, provided the essential historical data on its origin. The natural progression from the preparation of copy for a printed catalog on slips or cards, to the use of these same slips or cards as entries in a catalog arranged in drawers, first for the exclusive use of librarians, then for the public, is related simply and convincingly.

During the course of his study, Dr. Ranz examined some one thousand library catalogs published by American libraries. "The great majority of them," he reports, "were rather poorly done, exhibited few innovations in cataloging techniques, and were frank imitations of the leading library catalogs of the day." Of these one thousand, Ranz describes 179 "which, collectively, embody most of the significant developments in printed book catalogs prior to the end of the nineteenth century." This list, filling some fifteen pages, should prove a valuable source to future students of cataloging history. There is also a bibliography of the books and periodical articles that the author found "most useful."—*Russell E. Bidlack, University of Michigan.*

The Myth of the Britannica. By Harvey Einbinder. New York: Grove Press, 1964. 390p.

Harvey Einbinder, a consulting physicist, appears to be a disillusioned young man. Until a few years ago he had assumed, as had most people, that whatever he read in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was accurate and reasonably up-to-date. Then one day he discovered that the article on Galileo in the 1958 edition of the set still retained the legend of the Leaning Tower, disproved by Cooper more than twenty years before.