Recent Publications

BOOK REVIEWS

Crowley, Terence, and Childers, Thomas. *Information Service in Public Libraries: Two Studies.* pref. by Ralph Blasingame, Jr. 210p. index. bibliog. appendix. Metuchen, N.J., Scarecrow, 1971. ISBN 0-81808-0406-9 LC 77-154298

One might well question the propriety of reviewing Terence Crowley and Thomas Childers' book, *Information Services in Public Libraries: Two Studies,* in a journal devoted to academic libraries. However, what professors Crowley and Childers have done in exploring devices and methods applicable to the measurement of information services has serious and important consequences for college and research libraries. One of the most difficult of a library's functions to measure and quantify for performance evaluation is the information services provided to its client groups. While this work addresses the need to know how effective and correct the information disseminated by reference departments and personnel is, a farther reaching effect is the model or style of measurement developed by these two researchers that has application in academic libraries as well as public libraries. Hence, their objective formulation, problem solving methodologies, and controlled data gathering and testing devices should be carefully considered by any academic librarian interested in reference service.

The two studies in this work are sequential in nature and explore the feasibility of developing and applying quantitative methods and statistical methodology in the assessment of information services. While the superficial nature of the studies might well lead one to conclude that the principal thrust was on the correctness or effectiveness of the information response mechanisms and the role of telephone reference, the substantive aspects of these studies lie in the intellectually conceived approach to the problem, the conceptual development of an investigatory scheme that would not change what was being measured (generally conceived as the Hawthorne effect) and the logical framework of the research undertaken.

Numerous conditions and factors were reviewed and considered by professors Crowley and Childers in the deliberation of what methodology for measurement would be needed. Factors such as per capita dollar amounts available to the various target libraries for books and professional staff, nonprofessional staff, and other expenditures in related areas were included in an interwelding of support conditions that a library might marshall to provide reference services. It was the provision of information services based upon the relationship between a high degree of support and the actual ability of the library to deliver factual and correct information that Crowley and Childers researched with a high degree of success. The control of variables to correspond to the researchers' original contentions and hypotheses coupled with the tactics and instruments devised for these studies should have general applicability in academic libraries.

Obviously certain techniques used by other researchers were employed, such as the use of standardized questions with a scale of difficulty, the use of anonymous callers and questioners, and a control target group of equal or near equal libraries. As such, Crowley and Childers' study borders very near to what Lowell Martin did in his study of the public service sections of the Chicago Public Library. What is of some interest is the similarity of results that Crowley and Childers received when compared to that of Lowell Martin's. Just in the area of accuracy of information services provided, only thirty-six percent of Crowley's questions were correctly answered. Childers did somewhat better as fifty-four percent of his questions were correctly answered. To add insult to in-

jury, Crowley's poor showing was explained by the fact that he included current event questions that required up-to-date sources for answers and some form of current awareness service to up-date the information resources of librarians and library support staff.

While the results of the two studies are depressing, a very positive approach to the study of qualitative measurement makes this book highly worthwhile. All academic librarians interested in the effectiveness and performance of their information service units would do well to study these research methods and begin to ask, "are we failing in one of our principal library tasks in not providing correct or valid information?" I recommend this book highly.—*Robert P. Haro, University of Southern California, Los Angeles.*

Kruzas, Anthony T., ed. *Encyclopedia of Information Systems and Services.* Ann Arbor, Michigan: Edwards Brothers, 1971. 1109 pages. $67.50.

Why does the editor choose not to mention the connection of this publication with its predecessor, *Directory of Special Libraries and Information Centers* (2d ed., 1968)? In many ways it is very similar. The content of the descriptions for each organization listed is similar (seventeen categories of information in the *Directory,* eighteen in the *Encyclopedia*). The format is different: in the former, the listings run several to a page with abbreviations and codes to conserve space; in the latter, each organization has a full page, with each category of information labeled. Some 13,000 organizations are listed in the former; 833 in the latter. The arrangement is slightly different: in 1968, U.S. organizations are separated from Canadian; some effort has been made in 1971 to include innovative services and exclude commercial services or traditional special libraries.

The substantive differences between the two publications exist in the indexes. In the *Encyclopedia* the different types of services or systems (e.g., abstracting and indexing services, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) Services, serials publications, micrographic applications and services, etc.) are indexed separately. Both editions

have personal name and subject indexes. The *Encyclopedia* contains an "Acronyms and Initialisms Dictionary."

Is a directory an encyclopedia or a dictionary? Can the permuted indexes created from directory information legitimately qualify a directory to be called an encyclopedia? I think not, but the indexes to this new edition of a directory of innovative, experimental, computerized information centers, networks, and data banks could have been useful indicators of the applications of new technologies in the field of information services if they were better done. Pity that the indexes are so poor. The subject index is especially poor, with many incongruous stylistic aberrations and a totally inadequate syndetic structure. Not only will these flaws frustrate and confuse the user of this book as a directory, but it will limit its usefulness as an analytic tool to study the availability of information systems for given subject areas. There are too many instances to cite, but perhaps these examples will suffice: (1) In Subject Index, *Handicapped Children* has no "see also" references; *Gifted Children* has "see also Exceptional Children"; *Exceptional Children* does *not* send the reader to Handicapped Children, Gifted Children, Blind, Brain-Diseases, and so on; (2) Two entries appear for the same ERIC Clearinghouse on Exceptional Children (pages 125 and 739 of the directory). Both appear in the Subject Index under Exceptional Children, but only one of each appears under Gifted Children or Handicapped Children.

The eight separate indexes for specialized features or services are merely an alphabetic listing of the organizations who have responded affirmatively to certain questions on the survey instrument. There is no attempt to analyze, for instance, what kind of computer application or service is provided, or for that matter if the abstracting and indexing services are complete for the collection held, published or available on request. There is no classified index by computer system or micrographic equipment used.

As a directory, this is a useful update of the 1968 edition of the *Directory.* As an encyclopedia, it is a poor first try. Recommended for libraries in need of information