

The editors should have provided a different direction for this book to face the fundamental questions librarians should or do have regarding the use of such reference tools. The obvious expertise of the authors could have been used to help other librarians learn about providing electronic data bases in reference service to a library's users.—*John Lubans, Jr., Assistant Director for Public Services, University of Colorado Libraries, Boulder, Colorado.*

***Proceedings of the 1973 Clinic on Library Applications of Data Processing: Networking and Other Forms of Co-operation.*** Ed. by F. Wilfrid Lancaster. Urbana-Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois Graduate School of Library Science, 1973. \$6.00.

This volume is a potpourri of materials on the application of computerized information handling techniques to one of the most complex and convoluted of today's "hot topics" in librarianship—networking. We have here a good mix of people, including library systems personnel, senior administrators, and information specialists, chosen specifically for their professional experience with networking at one stage or another—designing, planning, developing, operating, and evaluating. Library school teachers are conspicuously absent, for the emphasis is squarely on the practical, not the academic. Most of the activities discussed are attempts at centralized technical processing, but information retrieval services for users are covered in McCarn (MEDLINE) and in parts of the papers by Randall and by Evans, whose generalized schematic approach is intriguing enough to steal the show from the particular project he is describing.

There are accounts of libraries "backing into network operations" (Brodman), where a system was designed for one library and then adapted for many, and of formally organized and chartered affairs like OCLC (Long), which had its objectives well enough defined at the outset to let a contract for the simulation of computer performance characteristics in order to make the right choice of machine for its purpose. Jolliffe provides the only European contribution with a succinct account of

Project LOC, a joint attempt to create a machine-readable union catalog of pre-1801 materials held at Oxford, Cambridge, and the British Museum. This is not a network, of course, but it could become the basis for one, and much more should be known about it in the U.S.

Whether or not the clinic succeeded in imparting help at the nuts and bolts level I do not know, but in published form the more interesting contributions are those that go beyond technical description to give us the flavor of what it is really like to be involved in computerized cooperation. The oft-repeated platitude that runs "The major problems are not technological, but organizational and administrative" seems depressingly confirmed by recurring comments on the problems of properly financing cooperative activity; or persuading librarians to give up some control of their operations and services; of being dependent upon a computer center which has many other missions and user groups; of increasing user expectations which then are not fulfilled; of whether and how to charge for services, etc. Even taken singly, most libraries have found it difficult enough, organizationally, to understand and exploit the computer (as any Gentleman of Quality knows). The immediate chances of them multiplying their manifestly severe bureaucratic problems by ten and then succeeding cannot be very high. Joseph Becker ends the volume with the hortatory comment that a national network of all types of libraries cooperating about everything is "just around the bend." Given the general tenor of the preceding papers, that seems a trifle optimistic.—*Peter G. Watson, University Library, University of California, Los Angeles.*

## OTHER BOOKS OF INTEREST TO ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS

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