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Davis, Donald Gordon, Jr. ***The Association of American Library Schools, 1915–1968: An Analytical History.*** Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1974. 385p. $12.50.

Davis, Donald Gordon, Jr. ***Comparative Historical Analysis of Three Associations of Professional Schools.*** (University of Illinois Graduate School of Library Science Occasional Papers, no.115. September 1974) 39p. $1.00.

Most library histories have been little more than pious memorials, blandly chronicling events with scant attempt to ascertain or convey their real significance. Donald Davis' twofold assessment of the Association of American Library Schools (i.e., the accredited library schools) is an abrupt departure from that unwelcome tradition of "nihil nisi bonum." There can be few library publications which are as forcefully critical and frank, as determinedly judgmental as these two monographs.

The two were originally one, joined together as Davis' doctoral dissertation, completed in 1972. The Scarecrow Press book is the main work, constituting essentially the original dissertation sans the section on "comparative analysis of three associations." The Occasional Paper represents the economical recycling of the material removed from the book. From internal evidence, one may guess that the revision has been more a case of not always well-concealed cutting and pasting than of extensive rewriting.

The studies address themselves to the question: "What has been the role of the AALS in education for librarianship?" or, rather more bluntly, "Have the criticisms of the AALS been justified?" (p.3). The answers are to be found in reviewing the history of the AALS itself and in comparing the role of the AALS with that played by two other associations of professional

schools: the Association of American Law Schools (AALawS) and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).

Both approaches lead Davis to conclusions which amount to a verdict of: very guilty. "The AALS has not played a very influential part in the development of library education," and "the general criticisms of the AALS were amply supported by the evidence examined," says the book (p.298). The Occasional Paper is hardly less severe: "The library school association did not to any degree obtain the effectiveness in achieving objectives that was displayed by the comparison groups" (p.33–34).

Davis accounts for this failure by identifying two "fatal weaknesses" in the AALS —its lack of identity and its too often halfhearted leadership. The two factors were interdependent. Having yielded responsibility for accreditation and the establishment of standards to the American Library Association, the AALS seemed to have no clear idea of what it was for or what it was to do. The main impetus for its continued existence was reduced to not much more than a simple desire for informal communication and fellowship (p.299). This lack of a sense of mission in turn made it all too easy for many AALS officers to give the association a low priority in their attention and efforts. Or perhaps, Davis speculates, it was the other way around—ineffective leadership making for vagueness and lethargy regarding goals and activities. In any case, it was the classic vicious circle.

For these harsh verdicts Davis offers ample evidence, perhaps even too much. Considering his view that AALS had so few tangible accomplishments to show for its existence, it seems somewhat odd, not to say dull, to have him give a year-by-year, program-by-program detailing of what little went on. Yet in another sense, one may wonder if Davis has collected the right sort of evidence at all. He apparently obtained testimony only from the "producers" of AALS programs, who probably suffered the normal sense of guilt about the gap between their aspirations and achievements. But did the "consumers"—the ordinary members—feel any similar disappointment? Perhaps informal interchange of ideas and a chance to get to know colleagues were quite good enough for them? Davis might well have found out, but he did not try.

Some doubts also attach themselves to the comparisons which Davis makes with the other professional school associations: AALawS and CSWE. One fact may be enough to make the point: At the 1968 meetings of the three groups, AALawS registered 1,853 persons, CSWE more than 2,000, and AALS about 100. With this degree of disparity in size and resources, are the three associations really comparable?

A final caveat must be made in respect of the "currency" of these studies. Although Davis circumspectly makes it clear that his gloomy conclusions apply only to the period up to 1968, it would be easy to infer from his studies that AALS's past has been prologue to a hopeless present. In point of fact, however, AALS's directions and character seem to have changed rather considerably since 1968. Membership, activities, and resources are all much greater than ever; it is thriving as never before. In short, AALS's future might well invalidate its past. Would it not be ironic if Davis' historical study, so admirably thorough, candid, and forthright, turned out to be of only historical interest?—*Samuel Rothstein, Professor, School of Librarianship, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.*

Harleston, Rebekah M., and Stoffle, Carla J. ***Administration of Government Documents Collections.*** Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1974. 178p. $9.50.

There has long been the need for a standard manual for the processing of U.S. documents. This is an excellent publication which should fill this need for almost every library; those libraries which have not previously developed their own manual can easily use this. Every function and routine in a documents collection is clearly defined, carefully and concisely explained, and accompanied by appropriate sample cards or forms.

Chapters cover the history and development of government publishing and the depository system, the SuDocs classification, bibliographical control, types and forms of records, acquisitions, processing, specialized procedures (corrections in the *Month-*