Recent Publications

BOOK REVIEWS

Clair, Colin. *A History of European Print-
ing.* New York: Academic Press, 1976.
526p. $28. LC 74-10333. ISBN 0-12-
174850-2.

This book provides a compact, one-
volume history of European printing from
its origins in the fifteenth century to the
present day. The author admits that this is
attempting to squeeze "a gallon into a pint,"
but he believes the economic situation in
Britain does not favor the multivolume work
the subject deserves. Very nearly two-thirds
of the book—twenty-four out of thirty-three
chapters—is devoted to the fifteenth and
sixteenth centuries. The remainder treats of
the development of the book arts mainly
through the *art nouveau* period, with rather
sketchy coverage of later innovations. As the
author has written another book on English
printing history, that topic receives less
emphasis than might be expected in a
British text. On the other hand, there is
stress on Scandinavian and Middle and

Eastern European printing often neglected elsewhere.

Colin Clair is the prolific English author and editor of books on various subjects, including several on the history of the book. Teachers of this subject already will have found his *Chronology of Printing* (1969) an invaluable handbook. In addition he has written *Christopher Plantin* (1960), *A History of Printing in Britain* (1965), *Unnatural History*—on bestiaries—(1967), and *Early Printing in Malta* (1969). Obviously well qualified, he writes a readable, no-nonsense text, packed with names and dates and following a strongly chronological approach.

One of the major uses of this book will surely be as a text in history of the book courses in library schools. As such it must inevitably be compared with the long-popular text, Steinberg's *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, now in its third edition, revised by James Moran in 1974. Both cover essentially the same material. Clair is more detailed, with a longer text, heavily factual and chronological, and with a more extensive bibliography. Steinberg-Moran is broader in viewpoint, more topical in approach, with chapters on such culturally related subjects as libraries, the reading public, and censorship. From a practical point of view, the inexpensive paperback by Steinberg will probably continue to be a text required for student purchase, while the Clair hardback at $28 will be restricted to assigned readings from reserve collections.

In this age of elaborately illustrated books, especially in the humanities, the format of this volume is modest indeed. A standard octavo of 526 pages, closely printed on smooth blue-white paper and bound in paper-covered boards, it bespeaks its practical textbook purpose. Despite the publisher's claim of lavish illustration, they are in fact unimpressive. Ninety-one black-and-white figures, mostly in-text, a few full-page, are scattered through the book. The quality varies; some line reproductions are clear, others are too heavily printed with resultant loss of detail, some are too small to be legible, and a few of the half-tones lack clarity. They are well integrated into the index but less well into the text, which seldom if ever refers directly to the illustrations.

The book has two appendixes, both tabulations of the spread of printing in Europe, and an excellent index. The bibliography is extensive, including titles in many languages and a goodly quantity of recent material. However, the bulk of the bibliography is arranged in sections that at first glance appear to parallel the chapters, but this is not strictly the case and results in some confusion.

In summary, Colin Clair's *History of European Printing* is an excellent book that should find wide usage as a textbook in library schools and in such subject departments as literature and history, as well as for reference and general reading in public and academic libraries.—*Budd L. Gambee, Professor, School of Library Science, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.*

Maltby, Arthur, ed. *Classification in the 1970s: A Second Look.* Rev. ed. London: Clive Bingley; Hamden, Conn.: Linnet Books, 1976. 262p. $12.50. LC 76-43965. ISBN 0-85157-221-9 Bingley; 0-208-01533-7 Linnet.

This work is a revision of the editor's *Classification in the 1970's: A Discussion of Development and Prospects for the Major Schemes,* which was published in 1972 and well received. The original work was a collection of ten papers prepared at Maltby's invitation by various authorities in the field, who were directed to specifically review the role of classification systems and techniques in the present decade and beyond, and the papers meet the editor's charge very well indeed.

The revised edition contains eleven papers addressed to the same charge, ten by the same authors writing on the same subjects as in the original work. The eleventh, "Automatic Classification" by Karen Sparck Jones, is new and is nontechnical review of the main lines of work on automatic information classification to date and the prospects for automatic classification, particularly in the large, on-line retrieval systems of the future. The author concludes that the apparent propects for automatic classification for library purposes are not very bright.

Comparing the ten original papers with