

New Research Guide

Guide to Research in Educational History.

By William W. Brickman. New York, New York University Bookstore, 1949. ix, 220p. \$2.50.

The academic disciplines of education and librarianship have many things in common. But their one striking similarity lies in their first function which is that of facilitating the approaches to knowledge. This preoccupation with paving the roads to learning is generally viewed with condescension by those colleagues in the academic community who are wholly engaged in the fields of learning for their own sake.

Hence the universal struggle for status in which scholars and teachers of higher learning jealously guard their preserves, and "educators," including librarians, perennially attempt invasions of the promised land. In the past, the outgroup professions have worked hard developing the philosophy, sociology and history of their operations with two large purposes in mind. The first has been to lay down the generalizations underlying professional practice. The second has been to enlarge the ego of groups practicing the underdog professions.

This tactic has not been without its successes. It might have had greater successes were it not for the fact that practical necessities of both education and librarianship have tended to emphasize administration and methodology at the expense of theory and background. In teachers' colleges, background material has been watered down and, at the moment, is pretty much in the role of a stepchild in the curriculum. In schools of librarianship, the question is in the balance, and a clear decision is not to be expected for some time. The new curricula, in an earnest effort to enhance the status of librarians as well as to raise the level of instruction, are bringing principle and subject matter to the fore. Practicing librarians, fearful of a dearth in the supply of ready-made technicians, are expressing their uneasiness via an undercurrent of depreciation and scoffing.

It is in the context of such tug of war that Dr. Brickman presents his *Guide*. He pleads with the educationists "to appreciate the fact that professional respect can only be earned in the open market of scholarship."

Pointing out that most educational historians have in the past concentrated on the professional and pedagogical aspects of their subject, the author argues that educational history is, after all, a brand of history, and should be studied with primary emphasis on historical content and scientific method.

Experienced teachers and librarians know full well that it takes more than a ready and willing student to make a scholar. They know also that it needs more than mandate and encouragement to produce careful fruitful research. Dr. Brickman's contribution to the process by which knowledgeable and intelligent people may be transformed into contributors to learning is a step-by-step guide over the hurdles and around the pitfalls.

He leads his student (after explaining to him the many by-product values of research as a way of learning) from the selection of a topic, through the preparation of an outline, to the use of reference tools and library catalogs which librarians know so well but which library users know so little. Having toured rather carefully and inclusively the general and specific sources of reference and bibliography, he proceeds to an exploration of the many types of source materials which should be mined in the accumulation of data and ideas.

But Dr. Brickman is not satisfied with a quick glance at the surfaces of great repositories of the stuff that makes history. His aim is to develop the habit of critical evaluation as well as sound, constructive use of materials. He therefore stops frequently to point out the good and the bad, the careful and the careless in specific pieces of writing. Nor does he hesitate to take "standard" writers to task for shallow thinking as well as for their irresponsible perpetuation of errors initiated by earlier writers in their subject. His chapter on "applying the historical method of research to education" will make exciting reading to interested students and should be richly suggestive to budding historians of librarianship as well.

All of which leads us to a consideration of the exact nature of this book's importance to college, research and other librarians. The first thing that occurs to the reviewer is that Dr. Brickman's guide is a most valuable

addition to that *genre* of reference work whose purpose it is to give the library patron a good start toward the mastery of a subject in which he expects to have a sustained interest. It fits into that category which already contains, in addition to a large number of works in historiography, such items as Louttit's *Handbook of Psychological Literature*, Mellon's *Chemical Publications*, Soule's *Library Guide for the Chemist*, and Parke's *Guide to the Literature of Mathematics and Physics*.

As a bibliographical start for the writer of a term paper or a full-fledged dissertation in educational history, it does its work well. There are few omissions of which the reviewer would wish to complain. Among the compiler's oversights are *The Literature of Adult Education*, by Beals and Brody, and the issue of the *Review of Educational Research* (October 1936) on the "History of Education and Comparative Education." Item 290 of Dr. Brickman's bibliography leads the reader to the issue of *Review of Educational Research* which covers the same field for the years 1936 to 1939, but somehow omits the basic bibliography published three years previous. Needless to say, there is a great deal of overlapping between the 1936 *Review of Educational Research*, which offers 975 bibliographical items, and the book under review at the moment. It should also be noted that the former, because of its running commentary and subject breakdowns, is in many respects a more usable bibliography than Dr. Brickman's. The *Guide* approach (which lists items by form of issue) must certainly relinquish many of the advantages of subject and period divisions.

The author feels that his detailed table of contents and subject index (to the bibliography only) obviate this difficulty and, in fact, "make a complete index unnecessary." From the user's point of view, no index could be too complete. For although the bibliographical

items and their annotations reveal "time" and "place" values excellently, the index does not light the way to them well enough. Many of Dr. Brickman's ablest critical evaluations of individual sources appear in the textual portion of his book. An expansion of the index to include these would greatly enhance the value of the book without substantially increasing its bulk.

Those who look to this *Guide* for assistance in the area of library history—which, after all, is a branch of educational history—will be disappointed with its meager coverage. The five monographic works in library history which Dr. Brickman has included are apparently selected for their broad coverage and because they meet the requirements of modern historical scholarship. They afford a fine entree into some aspects of library history but are not sufficient. It would be helpful if, in a future edition, the compiler could at least do more with the bibliography of library history. He has not even listed Cannon's *Bibliography of Library Economy* and the volumes of *Library Literature* which bring it up to date.

Perhaps we should not complain so much of neglect when we ourselves are guilty of having neglected to investigate thoroughly the past of our profession. There is a special need for guilt feelings in a group which is so well trained to handle source materials. It is surely overoptimistic to hope that education for librarianship, in its current transition toward a greater concern with principles and backgrounds, will emphasize the research point of view. One hint given last year by President Harold Taylor of Sarah Lawrence College, at a meeting of the New York Library Club, is that it may be possible to do a sizable part of the job of training for the profession by requiring library school students to do meaningful subject projects which involve the extensive use of well-arranged libraries.—*Sidney Ditzion, College of the City of New York Library.*

Communications Research

Communications Research, 1948-49. Edited by Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank N. Stanton. New York, Harper and Brothers, 1949. xviii, 332p. \$4.50.

Inasmuch as the editors of this third

volume of a series begun in 1941 under the title of *Radio Research* have found it desirable to use a more general term for the title of the first postwar volume, it should be interesting and instructive to make at