Woodburn will inevitably be compared with Evan J. Crane's *Guide to the Literature of Chemistry* (1957); M. G. Mellon's *Chemical Publications: Their Nature and Use* (1965); and C. R. Burman's *How to Find Out in Chemistry* (1966). In several fields—collections of spectra, microform material, and computer-readable material —Woodburn is clearly more up to date, and the entire work is a valuable and most useful addition to the science reference shelf.—*David Kuhner, Librarian, Sprague Library, Harvey Mudd College, Claremont, California.*

Computers and Early Books: Report of the LOC Project Investigating Means of Compiling a Machine-Readable Union Catalogue of pre-1801 Books in Oxford, Cambridge and the British Museum. London: Mansell, 1974. 131p. $12.00. (74-76872). (ISBN 0-7201-0444-0).

The LOC Project represents search for a practical method to produce a union list of the contents of all libraries of Oxford and Cambridge universities and to relate their resources to those of the British Museum. The calculations based on the results of the project indicate that about a half million unique titles of pre-1801 books alone are held in these libraries. Until now, the success in making the entire spectrum of this wealth systematically available to researchers has eluded the efforts of bibliographers. However, the emerging computer technology recently has opened up possibilities to attack this mammoth task without armies of skilled manpower. The LOC Project has aimed to devise, test, and evaluate techniques for the massive task of compiling a union catalog by exploiting the potential of the new emerging technology.

The LOC Project, which was funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in 1968 and was brought to completion in 1973, represents thoroughly planned and meticulously performed research in the fundamentals of creating machine-readable bibliographic records from books on shelves. It has assumed no available systematized bibliographic data in the sense of customary catalogs. It has researched the feasibility of creating adequately precise machine-readable records on the basis of rudimentary, easily recorded data from the books

themselves. Bearing in mind that the object union catalog had been restricted to books published before 1801, the task assumes an additional dimension of challenge if one remembers the character of the title pages of early books, ranging from the elusively descriptive to the poetic.

The method chosen for the project specified the compilation of the bibliographic records from the title pages of a sample consisting of all pre-1801 books in all Cambridge and Oxford libraries cataloged under the letter "O," except for three college libraries which were recorded in their entirety. To serve as a system of normalized base for comparison, a reference file was established also against which the records from all college, departmental, and faculty libraries could be matched. This file consisted of the "O" letter catalog records from the British Museum, the Bodleian, the Cambridge University Library, and the library of the Taylor Institution, Oxford; added were also "O" entries from Pollard and Redgrave's *Short Title Catalogue (revised)*, from Wing's *Short Title Catalogue*, and from H. M. Adam's *Catalogue of Books . . . in Cambridge Libraries.* The records produced by the project were matched by computer against each other and against the reference file, using three matching techniques: a computer generated search code, the "keyed title," and the "fingerprint" identification technique. The matched records from the entire sample were assimilated, and a specimen union list was produced.

Aside from its principal objective the project produced a wealth of statistical data about the distribution of materials by date, language, and numbers of copies of works in the various libraries; about the relative merits and costs of various methods in capturing bibliographic data for machine-readable transcription; about the problems involved in several methods and devices used in the transcription; and about the problems which arose in computer matching and printing of bibliographic records, ranging from identification of data structures to representation of characters in a large array of languages.

A particularly noteworthy achievement of the LOC Project is the successful ex-

ploration of the matching of bibliographic records representing materials in 221 libraries for the purpose of correlating their bibliographic identity. In the process of this activity the project has shed new light on possibilities of computer-aided recognition of identification of bibliographic items. It has also elaborated a new, powerful, and ingeniously simple method of this recognition, the "fingerprint," which may open up a far-reaching potential for the management of bibliographic records in national and international context.

The project has contributed new knowledge about bibliographic data also in other areas. There is much in the pages of the LOC Report pointing in the direction of a sophisticated simplicity inherent in bibliographic data as contrasted with our currently prevailing and unquestioned reliance on systematically exhaustive accumulation of interpreted bibliographic data as a basis for future direction of computerized management of bibliographic records. Implicit in some of the principal observations in the LOC Report is the potential for a powerful alternative to the present-day bibliographic management anchored in a cataloging code coupled with a large measure of interpretation for compatibility.

The LOC Report is rich in detailed data; it summarizes the results with clarity and is oriented within a perspective of practicality. The success of the work owes much to the distinguished group of experts who participated in the definition of the project and to the competent and devoted work of the project team working against a full measure of difficulties caused by a computer not intended for textual data processing. The director of the project was John W. Jolliffe, keeper of catalogues of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, a library automation pioneer renowned for his insight, research discipline, and professional standards. The report will take its place among the select group of classics in library automation literature, and its observations and tabulated data are likely to inspire reevaluation of many a current practice. For the automation-oriented rare books bibliographer in particular the LOC Report offers the challenge of radically new horizons.—*Ritvars Bregzis, University of Toronto Library.*

OTHER BOOKS OF INTEREST TO ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS

Abajian, James de T. *Blacks and Their Contributions to the American West; A Bibliography and Union List of Holdings Through 1970.* Boston: G. K. Hall, 1974. 487p. $29.50. (74-8695). (ISBN 0-8161-1139-1).

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The Almanac of World Military Power. 3d ed. Ed. by Trevor N. Dupuy and others. New York: Bowker, 1975. 400p. $25.00. (74-7578). (ISBN 0-8352-0730-7).

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Armitage, Andrew D., and Tudor, Dean. *Annual Index to Popular Music Record Reviews, 1973.* Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1974. 681p. $20.00. (73-8909). (ISBN 0-8108-0774-2).

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