BOOK REVIEWS

Guide to the Research Collections of the New York Public Library. Compiled by Sam P. Williams, under the direction of William Vernon Jackson and James W. Henderson, with the editorial assistance of Harvey Simmonds, Rowe Portis, and William L. Coakley. Chicago: American Library Assn., 1975. 336p. $35.00. (LC 75-15878) (ISBN 0-8389-0125-5)

"A universe of libraries" is the apt term used by Director James W. Henderson to describe the Research Collections of the New York Public Library, which have been carefully viewed, evaluated, and presented in this new research tool. A ten-year endeavor, it will be heralded as a successful one by researchers, by cooperative library groups, by networks, and others.

Since last described in a 1941 volume compiled by Karl Brown, the Research Libraries collections have doubled in size, now comprising over four million volumes. The team of scholars chose to write a new

edition of the Brown work rather than to issue a supplement to it. One does not find it necessary, therefore, to refer back to Brown's *Guide to the Reference Collections of the New York Public Library.* The new *Guide* is formatted in the same style as the original work and, indeed, some of Brown's phrasing is retained here and there.

Whereas the first *Guide* was arranged by the old Billings Classification Schedule, the new one is arranged by major disciplines and broken down under smaller subjects. There is a very good subject index as well as a relative index which leave us no cause for quarrel with the compiler insofar as access to topics is concerned.

Not every category of material owned by the library is included in the book; only the most noted and extensive collections are represented here. They are described in narrative form under the heading of the subject with which they are concerned. "Woman," for example, is a subheading under "Sociology, Statistics, Political Science," which is a subheading under the larger sub-

ject "Sociology." This collection is described in a half page as a "strong subject in the Research Libraries," with a few details given about the personal papers in the collection of some outstanding women, commentary on donors to the collection, and figures given for the number of entries (12,000) in the catalog under "Woman." Reference is made to holdings in the category concerned with the feminist movement.

To inform the readers of this review what the volume is *not* seems also to be in order. It is *not* a checklist, a bibliography, a union list, a catalog. Few specific titles are mentioned except to make reference to manuscripts, outstanding works, or extremely rare items. The volume is *not* a history of the Research Libraries of the New York Public Library. For historical treatises on the great NYPL, please be referred to works by Harry M. Lydenberg and Phyllis Dain. It is *not*, as previously stated, an absolutely complete reflection of every collection held by the Research Libraries.

The guide is a needed new addition to library research tools so important today when computers, TWX lines, and other rapid communication media bind us ever closer and make an immediate response almost necessary instead of only desirable. But one wonders why ALA put such a high price tag on the volume, particularly since philanthropy played a large part in bringing it into being. Perhaps there is some reason not known to us. But, nevertheless, a vote of thanks to Williams, Jackson, Henderson, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Emily E. F. Skeel, et al.—*Roscoe Rouse, University Librarian, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater.*

Salmon, Stephen R. *Library Automation Systems.* Books in Library and Information Science, vol. 15. New York: Marcel Dekker, 1975. 291p. $24.50. (LC 75-25168) (ISBN 0-8247-6358-0)

The author's purpose for this book is to present "a reasonably comprehensive discussion of library automation systems for the librarian without previous knowledge or experience in the field, and for the intelligent layman." The approach is historical; systems covered range from the pio-

neering ones to those in production at the moment the manuscript was submitted. Only systems that were implemented (even if they failed or were discontinued) or are in operation are included. Projects or systems not operational are omitted from both the discussion and the bibliography. The discussion is limited to automated technical services and circulation activities. Computer-supported reference and information services are not discussed.

This is not a book on *how* to automate a library. Each type of system is "discussed from a general historical viewpoint" so as to show "the implications of various developments in each category." Thus, the lesson for the reader is in the examination of what has been implemented, what has failed, what has become obsolete, and what has succeeded.

The book is divided into ten chapters: (1) Background and Beginnings; (2) Acquisition Systems; (3) Cataloging Systems before MARC; (4) MARC and Off-line Systems after MARC; (5) On-line Cataloging Systems; (6) The Effect of Automation on Cataloging Practice; (7) Serials Systems; (8) Circulation Systems; (9) The Problems of Library Automation Systems; and, (10) The Prospects of Library Automation Systems.

Each chapter on systems begins with a list of general characteristics: typical activities, functions, outputs, and limitations. Specific systems are discussed in roughly chronological order, beginning with unit record-based systems and ending with on-line systems. Commercially produced and marketed systems are also included. The discussion of most systems is necessarily brief, but usually covers: type of equipment used (including terminals), cost of development, per-unit operating costs (when available), outputs, programming language, method of producing outputs (e.g., COM for book catalogs), filing rules used, successes, and failures. By intention, the author does not explore how data processing equipment works, just what equipment is used in each system.

Each chapter ends with an extensive list of notes that comprise a helpful bibliography for further reading on each system. At the end of the book, there is a bibliog-