

Recent Publications

Machlup, Fritz; Leeson, Kenneth; and associates. <i>Information through the Printed Word</i> , reviewed by Hendrik Edelman	71
<i>Sertals Management and Microforms: A Reader</i> , reviewed by Sister Alma Marie Walls .	75
<i>Personnel in Libraries</i> , reviewed by J. Wayne Baker	75
McCoy, Donald R. <i>The National Archives: America's Ministry of Documents, 1934-1968</i> , reviewed by Patrick M. Quinn	76
OCCLC: <i>A National Library Network</i> , reviewed by Patricia Ann Sacks	78
Miller, Jerome K. <i>Applying the New Copyright Law: A Guide for Educators and Librarians</i> , reviewed by Nancy H. Marshall	80
Maizell, Robert E. <i>How to Find Chemical Information: A Guide for Practicing Chemists, Teachers, and Students</i> , reviewed by David Kuhner	81
<i>Bibliographic Instruction Handbook</i> , reviewed by Leonard Grundt	82
Bollier, John A. <i>The Literature of Theology: A Guide for Students and Pastors</i> , reviewed by John B. Trotti	82
Morrow, Carolyn Clark. <i>A Conservation Policy Statement for Research Libraries</i> , reviewed by Catherine Asher	84
Rowley, J. E. <i>Mechanised In-House Information Systems</i> , reviewed by Sarojini Balachandran	84
<i>American Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide from Colonial Times to the Present</i> , reviewed by Martha Chambers	86
Brenni, Vito Joseph. <i>The Bibliographical Control of American Literature, 1920-1975</i> , reviewed by Jim Elledge	87
<i>Studies in Library Management</i> , V.5, reviewed by Mary Scherger Bonhomme	89
Clasper, James W., and Dellenbach, M. Carolyn. <i>Guide to the Holdings of the American Jewish Archives</i> , reviewed by Kurt S. Maier	89
Stineman, Esther. <i>Women's Studies: A Recommended Core Bibliography</i> , reviewed by Jeanette Mosey	90
Williamson, Jane. <i>New Feminist Scholarship: A Guide to Bibliographies</i> , reviewed by Jeanette Mosey	90
<i>Proceedings of the American Studies Library Conference</i> , reviewed by Wayne A. Wiegand	91
Other Publications of Interest to Academic Librarians	92

BOOK REVIEWS

Machlup, Fritz; Leeson, Kenneth; and associates. *Information through the Printed Word: The Dissemination of Scholarly, Scientific, and Intellectual Knowledge*. New York: Praeger, 1978. 3v. V.1, Book Publishing, \$22.95; V.2, Journals, \$25.95; V.3, Libraries, \$20.95. LC 78-19460. ISBN 0-03-047401-9, V.1; 0-03-047406-X, V.2; 0-03-047411-6, V.3.
New York University economist Fritz Machlup and his associates have worked at least four years on their statistical survey of

the American scholarly and scientific book world.

The results are now available in 860 pages including 187 statistical tables, reproduced from typescript in three volumes and possibly one more to follow. The study was largely funded by the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities in response to the perceived crisis in scholarly publishing and library acquisitions during the early seventies. In contrast to the availability in some Western European countries, usable statistical information on this subject has

been extremely scarce in the United States. The lack of quantitative and descriptive standards for statistics of book and journal production, prices, and sales, as well as library collection development, has been the reason for much shallow and speculative writing on the subject, not to mention the rather uncertain basis for commercial and institutional planning.

Machlup's earlier work *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States* (1962) was a first major step, and in recent years the work of the Book Industry Study Group and notably that of statistician John Dessauer as well as Donald King Associates have made real contributions.

In this ambitious project, Machlup and Leeson build carefully on all earlier work, but they have made extensive surveys themselves of some seventy-five American publishers (representing 75,000 titles), an unspecified number of scholarly and scientific journals, 120 academic and research libraries, as well as some scholarly consumer

groups, notably the members of the American Economic Association.

The results are interesting from many view points, but I would like to single out two main areas. First of all, there is no question that this report is the most comprehensive survey produced yet and that the information will be extremely useful for further research and planning.

There are also numerous shortcomings in the data presented, but the results have been very carefully documented and qualified wherever necessary. There are some real problems with the surveys and their results, however.

For unspecified, but presumably practical, reasons the survey is limited to U.S. publications. While one could easily defend the position that the flow of information as it pertains to the U.S. is limited to the English language, there is no way that one can exclude the British and Western European book and journal production in that language. A substantial part of the commercial expansion of scholarly and scientific publishing after World War II has taken place overseas. That industry is largely based on American research and produced by American authors, and (until very recently) the market for these publications was primarily the American library market. The exclusion of such a significant segment of the market makes the title misleading and the interpretation difficult.

The general exclusion of publications issued by official agencies, such as the United Nations, the United States government, and social, economic, and political bodies, such as banks and labor unions, creates a problem on an even larger scale. In terms of quantity as well as scholarly utility, these publications appear to be the fastest growing group of primary research reports.

The authors try to refrain from making generalizations—and they succeed in most cases; but when they do, there are problems. For instance, the estimate that scholarly, scientific, and "intellectual" books account for between 28 and 62 percent of the total net dollar sales of the industry can hardly be considered a helpful figure. In some areas, such as the analysis of book prices, not much new light is shed, and the results given in the report are as unreliable



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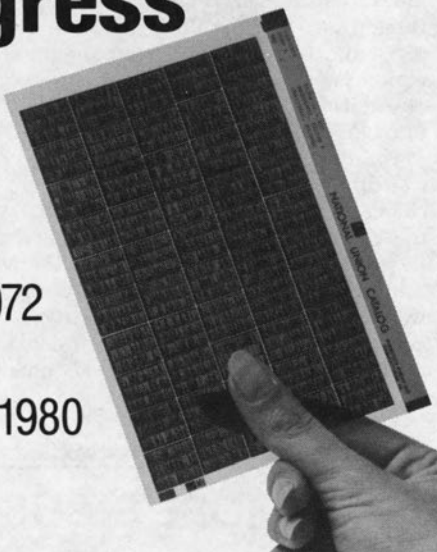
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as anything presented before. The need for specific and comparable data in this area, so essential for research library planning, remains unsatisfied.

The data produced as the result of the library questionnaires deserve special attention here. Machlup's approach to problems in data gathering from research libraries was rather abrupt, and he should have recognized the sensitivity in the library world toward outside surveyors. All too often have these "quickies" resulted in naive, sweeping, and sometimes damaging generalizations, such as the Allen Kent study of circulation and acquisitions data at Pittsburgh.

There is nothing really new, however, in the 200 pages that make up the library chapters of this report. Those familiar with the controversial questionnaires will not be surprised by that. Nevertheless, there are somewhat better data in a few areas than were available before. The librarians' perception of the relative increase or decline of buying in specific subject fields is noteworthy. Similarly, the data on foreign purchases

have not been documented before in this fashion. This leads to what I would suggest as the second most important aspect of the Machlup-Leeson study.

The report is a study in frustration. Its utility lies in its painful limitations. No one will ever have to do again what the authors have done, and we should be very grateful for that. The seriousness and thoroughness with which the researchers went about their work clearly expose the real problems that face investigators and interpreters of communication through the printed word. The complete lack of standardization in the classification of knowledge and the communication channels is a barrier that seems almost impossible to overcome. Scholars, publishers, librarians, and government officials all use their own language and criteria for describing and evaluating the universe. The field of bibliometrics is still a field of micromilestones; the longer view still eludes us. Add to this the fact that scholarly communication is an international, worldwide affair, and the complexity of the problem becomes only greater.

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Machlup and Leeson have demonstrated more clearly than anyone else before what a task still lies ahead. The failure of the recently completed National Enquiry on Scholarly Communication (its report published by Johns Hopkins, 1979) to come to terms with even the basic concepts of the problem is a similarly clear illustration. According to the introduction, Machlup expects to publish a revision and update of his 1962 study in the next few years. We look forward to this with great anticipation. Meanwhile, these three volumes of primary data should be on the desk of everyone who wants to work in this field that is so essential to academic librarians.—*Hendrik Edelman, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.*

Serials Management and Microforms: A Reader. Edited by Patricia M. Walsh. Microform Review Series in Library Micrographics Management, no.4. Westport, Conn.: Microform Review, Inc., 1979. 302p. \$21.50. LC 78-13179. ISBN 0-913672-11-4.

Like the other readers in this series, this is a collection of articles, most of which were published in well-known journals during the seventies. A general introduction by the editor describes it as "an attempt to analyze factors that would affect the efficient functioning of the microform serials collection, both from a management point of view and from the point of view of the user." The material she has chosen does that well.

Introductions to each section preview the factors treated under "Microforms and Serials: The User's Point of View"; "The Economics of Microforms and Serial Conversion Priorities"; "Specific Microform Applications: Case Studies"; "The Impact of Microforms upon Journal Format"; and "Extended Applications of Microforms for Serials." The appendix contains excerpts from *A National Periodicals Center: Technical Development Plan* and a statement about the CONSER File on COM.

Many of the authors quoted stress the importance of studying the usage patterns, budget, and personnel of the individual libraries before deciding to convert all or part of the collection to microform. Only then can they expect to enjoy the benefits of the

change, including the replacement of back issues often at lower prices than paper copies. Purchasing the microform eliminates preparing, binding, and processing volumes while costing less than binding and saving 90 percent of the storage space needed for hard copy.

A viewing area with well-designed, easy-to-operate equipment, sufficient storage cabinets, and enthusiastic personnel are prerequisites for obtaining user acceptance, lack of which reputedly results from poor management decisions. The case studies represent libraries connected with large and small universities, junior colleges, a high school, and a hospital. Librarians wish all microform items could be in the same format in order to save equipment costs and instruction time. Additional readings listed at the beginning of each section, as well as after many articles, make evident the proliferation of writings on the topic.

Libraries receiving many inquiries about microforms and that do not want to risk the disappearance of hard copies of these informational articles will find this volume worthwhile.—*Sister Alma Marie Walls, Immaculata College, Immaculata, Pennsylvania.*

Personnel in Libraries. LJ Special Report #10. New York: Library Journal, 1979. 63p. \$5; cash with order, \$3.95. ISBN 0-8352-1192-4. ISSN 0362-448X.

This group of essays offers a brief, succinct overview of some of the problems encountered by library personnel in this era of rapid change. It covers a wider range than personnel work, per se, as could be mistakenly interpreted from the title.

There are ten essays and one bibliography, most of which should be thought-provoking. No definitive answers are attempted, but several of the essays have references appended that are helpful for further investigation. Some of the areas covered include management, continuing education, performance and evaluation, associations, sexual discrimination and economic inequalities (with bibliography), and a helpful bibliography of general and library-related personnel literature.

Many changes have occurred over the years that have had an effect on libraries