

Shelf Work

Shelf Work in Libraries. By William H. Jesse. Chicago, American Library Association, 1952. 68p. \$1.25.

"Shelf Work" is a comparatively new term in the librarian's glossary. The author of this book considers shelf work to be "the act of delivering a book when it is wanted, returning it to its assigned place when it is no longer needed, and seeing that it is properly cared for until it is wanted again." To accomplish these objectives, shelf work administration is concerned with the arrangement of the book collection; special shelving problems such as oversized books; the housing and arrangement of non-book materials; "the exploitation of architectural and aesthetic possibilities of building areas in which readers are in direct contact with the books"; order and cleanliness in the stack areas of the library; shifting of books or moving of the book collection, when and if this is required; and inventory of the book stock. The qualifications of the shelf worker, his training and his supervision, are also discussed in this book.

In essence, here is an attempt to describe in a small volume the management of the library's book collection. The emphasis is on "adequate and efficient service to the library user." This is a practical manual for the supervisor of shelf work whether shelf work is his full-time or part-time responsibility, and he is told "what should be done, why, and how it may best be accomplished." It will offer the uninitiated stack supervisor a good guide to his work and responsibilities. If he follows the foot-note references, he will learn more about specific problems which arise in his work area. He might be better served in this respect if the author had included a selective bibliography. For the experienced shelf worker, here is a quick review which he will find up to date on tried practices and suggestive of new approaches to old problems.

It seems to this reviewer that it would be unfair to attempt to criticize this book in detail. One could debate, for example, the validity of the statement that "the shelf worker who pages books must have access to the shelf list, if he is to do his work speedily and efficiently." In one short paragraph the author simply does not have sufficient space to particularize this assertion or to discuss the test upon which it is based. Again, a current concern of librarians is the question of com-

pact shelving or compact storage. Reference is made to some of the better known articles and books on the subject, but it is not treated in any detail and is not mentioned in the chapter of the book on stack management and shelving equipment. Other examples could be cited, but the point remains that either the book was produced under too limited a budget or it was projected only as an introduction to the subject. This is not to say the book is not worth reading. It is a good manual. But in these days of emphasis on sound management and personnel practices in libraries and the mechanization of clerical routines and procedures, librarians need and deserve a more thoroughgoing analysis and evaluation of their experiences with these problems, available equipment, suggested procedures, and other data which will help them operate their libraries more efficiently and effectively. The author of *Shelf Work in Libraries* can do this job as is made evident by this book. It is up to the American Library Association to encourage and sponsor the undertaking.—*John H. Ottemiller, Yale University Library.*

Punched Cards in Libraries

Library Applications of Punched Cards: A Description of Mechanical Systems. By Ralph H. Parker. Chicago, American Library Association, 1952. 80p. \$2.75.

Librarians are generally aware of two kinds of punched cards. The more familiar type, because it has been more frequently adapted to library routines, is the card notched or slotted along the edges and adapted to hand sorting from file by use of a needle. The other type of punched card is for use in machines manufactured by International Business Machines and Remington Rand, Inc. This latter type is the subject of Ralph Parker's book—the card used to actuate machines for the arrangement and tabulation of a variety of data. (Another book by another author also appeared this year with similar title, but on the subject of the notched card sorted by needle.¹) The study in hand was started some ten years ago. It was withheld from publication to await new developments in the manufacture of punched card machines, so that a more com-

¹ McGaw, Howard F. *Marginal Punched Cards in College and Research Libraries.* Washington, D.C. The Scarecrow Press, 1952. 218p.