The appendix lists the cataloging code currently used by the center in cataloging and processing books for adult and juvenile collections.

Hendricks covers a lot of ground in the survey, going from general considerations to a regional and to a specific geographic base. The study seems well planned and well carried out, and the purpose of the study has been met. The survey has a far broader interest group than the system or the region studied. Librarians concerned with regional cooperative projects and centralized processing would do well to read the report. Any group planning an evaluative survey of existing and potential cooperative programs should benefit from the investigator's approach to the problem.— *Lawrence E. Leonard, University of Illinois, Urbana.*

The Southwestern Library Association Project Report: ALA Chapter Relationships, National, Regional, and State. Grace T. Stevenson. American Library Association, 1971. 153p. $2.50.

Mrs. Stevenson has done a very thorough and intelligent assessment of the library associations of Southwestern United States. While the subject matter does not lend itself to exciting reading, those persons interested in effective professional organization will find this useful as virtually everything presented may be applied to any library association.

The major recommendations (p.107–09) could be used as a basis for self-analysis and discussion by library associations although actual implementation of some recommendations would be exceedingly complex due to the disparities from state to state and the proliferation of organizations.

One small criticism: This reviewer would have preferred the recommendations to start with the *Individual Librarians* and work on up to the national, as the key to any progress is the individual.

Throughout the study other comments and findings of equal importance are given as related to "where do we go from here." Consequently, the entire report must be read carefully or pertinent points could be missed.

For example: On page 93 is a very brief paragraph concerning legislative activities of regional library associations, which supports the idea that such an activity is inappropriate at the regional level (this is not to imply fiscal support of national legislative activity is inappropriate!).

Also, the devastating outline of activities given on page 95 which are indeed "thin" when placed against not only the dollar cost but also against the effort and energy of the people involved. It is quite conceivable that enthusiasm for conferences runs in inverse proportion to experience of direct involvement in the actual preparation of one.

Another example is actually one of the most far-reaching conclusions in the report and could easily be overlooked. On page 80 a concept of relationship with ALA is developed that this reviewer has not seen elsewhere. It is worthy of more than passing consideration and should be studied by the regional associations individually and collectively.

Especially interesting to this reviewer was the conclusion on page 49 that "More regional meetings within the states, small regional conferences and institutes" were wanted by members but no reference was made to this in the final summary. The reviewer's interest arises from the fact that in 1972 PNLA plans to proceed with a series of small regional meetings of the workshop variety in several locations within its region. Already rumblings of dissatisfaction as to such a radical departure are being heard in spite of the fact that the membership approved overwhelmingly a constitutional change to biennial conferences with the alternate year devoted to workshops!

One point all chronic grumblers about associations should read and take to heart is the conclusion beginning on page 36. "There is a further obligation on the individual members—the obligation to volunteer. Perhaps we can't expect this of the new, possibly diffident, member, but there are prima donnas in every organization who feel their talents should be sought after rather than offered freely. Over and over again from each state, there was voiced the difficulty of getting people to accept assignments, or failure to discharge their responsibilities after they had accepted." It is too much to hope that those members of the profession to whom these words apply

will read and take them to heart. If this were to come about, studies and reports such as this one would never be needed. —*Maryan E. Reynolds, Washington State Library, Olympia.*

Information, Mechanism and Meaning. Donald M. MacKay. Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1969. 196p. $2.95.

Most librarians today would agree that a major, if not the major, function of libraries is the transfer of "information" from authors to readers. To facilitate the execution of this function, librarians classify their collections, provide subject, author, and title indexes, purchase bibliographies of every description, provide professional reference service, etc. Yet what precisely is this "information" that librarians work so hard to help transfer? How can we recognize what information a potential reader is lacking? How can we be sure that we are doing the best job of representing in our catalogs the information which authors have represented in their books? Without an adequate theory of information we really have no way of answering these questions in a rigorous way. Dr. MacKay is concerned in this book with the beginnings of such a theory of information.

MacKay is head of the Research Department of Communication at the University of Keele. He puts his background in physics to use at several points in this development of a formal model of how human beings store their information and how they add to, modify, and validate this store. His approach is nonlinguistic; that is, he views the messages that human beings send each other as unanalyzed wholes, which, as entities, have meaning to the sender and to the receiver of the message. He hypothesizes that the human mind at any given time is in a state of conditional readiness to react to stimuli in a certain way. When a message containing information is received, it results in a change in the individual's state of conditional readiness. The meaning of a message he defines as a function which selects a particular state of conditional readiness from all the possible states of conditional readiness. He does not suggest that his hypothesis describes how the brain really handles information, only that his model is a mechanism capable of representing what the brain seems to do.

None of the ideas contained in this book are new. The book is a collection of three radio broadcasts and nine papers (plus two more papers reproduced as appendices) presented by the author from 1950 to 1964. Hence, the date of publication is misleading. MacKay has added an introductory chapter and has inserted a foreword and postscript to many of the papers, each a chapter in the book, in an attempt to provide continuity. He has used the technique of putting passages which can be skipped by readers of earlier chapters in small type. This technique only partly alleviates the major fault of the work—redundancy. In the later chapters, there is much said that has been said before, sometimes in almost identical terms. It is unfortunate that MacKay could not have taken the time to pull together all of the ideas from the various papers and present his thesis in a more organized fashion. It is also unfortunate that he has added no new references to those originally included in his papers. The work does not provide a very good entry into the literature of information theory, since even the original references were not intended to be exhaustive.

This book is certainly not a definitive work on the theory of information. However, in many respects, it is a stimulating and highly theoretical work. Those seeking practical advice on the design of library automation projects or the construction of information retrieval systems should look elsewhere. Those seeking insight into the basic nature of the information transfer process may find something here to stimulate their thinking.—*Edward A. Eaton III, The University of Texas at Austin.*

Library Lit.—The Best of 1970. Bill Katz and Joel J. Schwartz, eds. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1971. 429p.

An apparently self-appointed jury of five (its origin is unclear in the introduction) took on the stultifying task of reading (scanning?) the full runs of some 200 library and general periodicals of the period November 1, 1969–October 31, 1970. The jury (the editors, professor and student, respectively, at Albany; John N. Berry, editor of *Library Journal;* William R. Eshelman, editor of *Wilson Library Bulletin;* and Eric