



Recent Publications

BOOK REVIEWS

The Collections and Programs of the American Antiquarian Society: A 175th Anniversary Guide. Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 1987. 183p. \$12.50 (ISBN 0-912296-92-3). LC 87-14480.

The American Antiquarian Society (AAS), one of the premier independent research libraries and learned historical societies in the United States, has never lacked, quite correctly, for the documentation of its own progress. In this century alone, even without regard to its own proceedings and transactions (which were first produced in 1820 and continue to the present), proud librarians of AAS have had their say at successive intervals. These watershed dates in the society's long past were marked by histories, guides, and exhibitions of this fabled collection of Americana.

Such "memoirs" of AAS occurred, for example, in 1937 when, in its 125th year the society produced R. W. G. Vail's *Guide to the Resources of the American Antiquarian Society*. Within four years of AAS' reaching its 150th anniversary, Clarence Brigham produced his remarkable autobiography as librarian of the society, *Fifty Years of Collecting Americana for the Library of the American Antiquarian Society, 1908-1958*. Then in 1969, a decade after AAS' current director and librarian, Marcus McCorison, arrived in Worcester, Massachusetts, to labor in the venerable institution, an exhibition catalog of truly memorable proportions was published—*A Society's Chief Joys*. Today this catalog re-

mains a model for this type of oft-produced "treasures" catalog, the kind that aspires to become a contribution to the greater accessibility of a collection. As all good exhibition catalogs do, these works innately provide a special service to those scholars needing an overview of a library's subject strengths.

Each of these publications in their own time, in their own way, possessed a common purpose of collection promotion for usage and visibility and further development. The differences in the personalities of the writers or the circumstances of individual contexts do not obscure this singular similarity. In this way these works are part of a broader literature of research librarianship and library history that tends to be overlooked because it is so taken for granted. Such well-produced and well-described collection guides and rules of access, those maps to the great collections generated most vigorously between 1930 and 1970, unfortunately in most cases, badly need revision toward current standards, viewpoints, and changes. The attitudes of research librarians and their patrons over the last twenty years need better representation. However, great and humble libraries alike can still profit from examining such classic publications as *Opportunities for Research in the John Carter Brown Library*, the Newberry Library's *An Uncommon Collection of Uncommon Collections*, or *The Widening Circle: The Story of the Folger Shakespeare Library and Its Collections* as models for their own collection surveys.

In the publication of *The Collections and Programs of the American Antiquarian Society: A 175th Anniversary Guide*, the tradition of celebrating a great research library's acquisitional genius has been reaffirmed, not simply for the society's own collection, but for the other independent research libraries, as well. As a joint effort of the entire professional staff of AAS, this guide delineates this collection for today's researchers. Married to this main concern, photography is used to depict the building housing so much primary-source material for early American history. And over the entire production, the institutional "folk memory," the attitudes of past staff members and current ones, of the former heads and current librarian McCorison's summations are allowed to show through. The work, thus, becomes a true history of the collections amassed and not a mere guide to them.

While it revises older publications, this *Guide* depicts a research institution truly representative of the future potential of American historical scholarship in the context of the libraries that house the raw materials for future analysis of the nation's past. In the last generation, AAS staff has more than doubled; its endowment is over ten times as large as it was in 1970. Indeed, the current achievement is underscored, not slighted.

AAS has always been an institution that collected assiduously by the broadest sweep and, conversely, down to the most imaginatively resourceful, topical detail. Up to 1876 as a general collection cut-off date, there is no better library to turn to for studies concerning American imprints and U.S. printing history, for research dependent on almanacs and early newspapers, for early American municipal records, for trade catalogs of all sorts, for the social history of the original English-speaking center of settlement in America. Counterpointing this impressive, broadly defined collecting are the detailed treatments that each of AAS' individually identified subjects afford for scholarly investigation. American social history is enriched accordingly by the organization that AAS has put on its collections of American political and intellectual docu-

ments, its religious history, and its literary and cultural records. These subjects have been treated in this collection guide with appropriate background history and purpose, along with thorough descriptions. A blueprint for the past, current, and future trends in scholarship is thus created for important library collections of the society, as well as a formal statement for future collection development.

The considerable care with which the numerous black-and-white photographs were taken indicate, as intended, visually how the library looks at this stage in its history. These images form a fitting companion to collection descriptions presented by curators. In fact throughout the *Guide*, in photographs, preface, chapter, and list, perhaps the main strength of the work, one that fulfills its purpose to be a commemorative piece is the work's honesty, its candidness. We see the overcrowded stacks, the imperfections of the folio bindings, the tatters, as well as the treasures. We see the staff's pride in a collection that is used—and used frequently by scholars—as well as the obligatory scenes of conservators and scholars at work, of computerized online projects, a crucial pioneering effort for other rare-book institutions in this country.

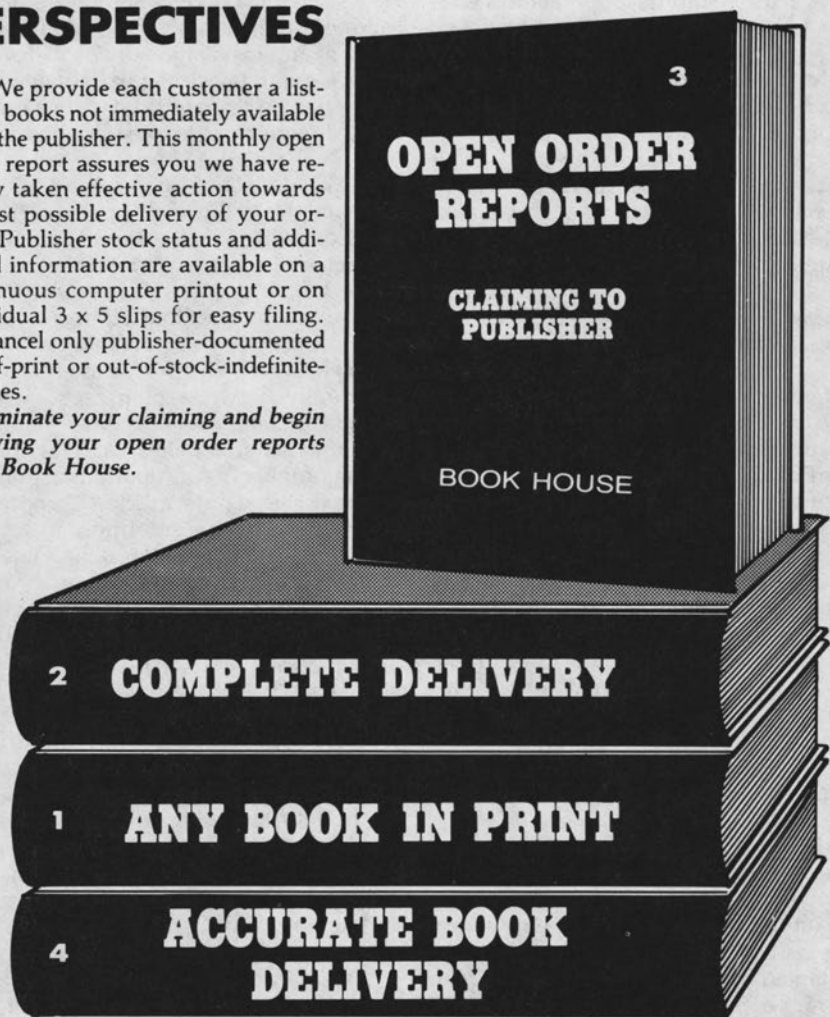
And overall, we see a staff and a library thoroughly enchanted by its own great history. The previous staff and past events are not forgotten, but commemorated in the context of future opportunity. Even McCorison's description of the society's buildings and grounds is imbued with this long-range view based on a thorough respect for the past. In this way the *175th Anniversary Guide*, becomes not only a memorial to a great independent research institution for humanistic endeavor, founded generations ago on the most altruistic notions and conceptions involving cooperation between the private and public sectors, but to general American library history as well.

Such "private" institutions should be regarded as the most "public" or civically spirited organizations of the early Republic. In the last generation they have rightly begun to receive appropriate federal support for programming. But even in an ear-

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lier day, great public officials—past American presidents in fact—were numbered on the boards and councils of such institutions as the American Antiquarian Society. A partnership in cooperation has always been recognized, at least tacitly. If there were any defect in an otherwise flawless production, this fact could have been better understood and expressed in the book's foreword, since it was broached. As Vail called it in 1937, "This great public, reference library" will be helped by a *Guide* that furthers the goals of a research collection which has, as its greatest tradition, the strengthening of the links between Americans and their own past.—John Neal Hoover, *St. Louis Mercantile, Library Association, Missouri*.

Conference on Integrated Online Library Systems. Proceedings, St. Louis, Missouri, September 23 and 24, 1986. Ed. by David C. Genaway. Canfield, Ohio: Genaway & Assoc., 1987. 460p. \$39.95 (ISBN 0-94397-005-9).

A genre of research literature that deserves more attention than it gets is conference proceedings. At first glance, one might dismiss the papers delivered at a conference in favor of data from monographic or scholarly journal sources, assuming that most published proceedings are essentially the same. In fact they are not, and the possibilities for potential research value are numerous. These conference proceedings reflect that value.

The underlying purpose of this conference on integrated online library systems, and therefore of its proceedings, is to reflect on the trend toward "open" library systems and linkages to other systems. Contained in the proceedings is information for people who have already selected and installed a system as well as introductory information for those in the process of acquiring a new or replacement system. While some papers deal with the selection and implementation of library online systems and subsystems, others focus on the human element of automation and post-installation concerns.

This is a very basic book. Proceedings are by nature a hybrid, part instruction manual and part textbook. The contrib-

uted papers and plenary session papers cover the entire spectrum of data on integrated online library systems. In these proceedings, there are a great number of articles that cover a multitude of related interests including the evaluation, selection, and installation of IOLS; developing RFPs; staff policies; impact of library automation on management; data conversion; and requirements for subsystems.

The question logically arises: What makes this book such a good investment given the fact that the same information is also available in the journal literature? The answer is that while the information can be found in journals, the scope of this book and the fact that it is in one published volume make this purchase worthwhile.

There are thirty-one papers divided equally between plenary sessions and contributed paper sessions. Excluding the "how we do it better" articles, a surprising number of contributions are outstanding. Richard Boss' article "Corporate Mergers and Consolidations and Coming Trends in Integrated Online Library Systems" merits consideration as does the eminently readable "Impact of Library Technology on Management" by Dwayne E. Webster. W. David Penniman's paper "The Effect of ISDN and LAN on Integrated Online Library Systems" also is good as is Robert Walton's contribution, "Microcomputer Library Systems and Subsystems: State of the Art Review." In the contributed papers section, John Corbin's superb twenty-page paper is what its title states—a primer in evaluating, selecting, and implementing an integrated online library system. Donald Riggs' article on "Transformational Leadership and the Electronic Academic Library" is also highly instructive. The balance of the papers of note cover a variety of subjects such as record ownership, psychological preparation for automation, requirements for interfaces with acquisitions subsystems, retrospective conversion, and the human and organizational aspect of technological issues, just to name a few.

One minor drawback is the 1986 date of the conference. Another caveat is that as with journal literature, there is an uneven quality to any group of published papers.