Playing it again

SYSTEMATIC BIBLIOGRAPHY: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO THE WORK OF COMPILATION / A.M. Lewin Robinson. 4th ed. London: Bingley. 1979. 135pp. £4.75 ISBN 0 85157 289 8.

I SUPPOSE that the appearance of a fourth edition of Robinson's *Systematic bibliography* is evidence of a continuing demand, but potential buyers who already have the third edition, of 1971 (or the second, of 1966), won't need to bother about it.

This is the third Bingley edition of a work originally published in 1963 by the University of Cape Town School of Librarianship. I have not seen the first edition, but the third and fourth simply bring up to date their immediate predecessor: there is no change in substance or exposition.

For example, this fourth edition adds a paragraph on ISBD and MARC and omits the discussion of standing type in cumulations.

Additionally it provides more recent illustrations — from more recent issues of serial bibliographies and from new editions of monographic. And C.D. Batty's chapter 'The use of computers in bibliographical compilation' is replaced by Margaret Lodder's 13 pages on 'The application of computers to systematic bibliography' — a change which doesn't justify buying the new edition. Otherwise everything is much the same.

I can't find much to praise in this book: the attempt at formulating the main principles involved in the practical work of compiling bibliographies' amounts to not much more than an extended consideration of the application of common sense. And it is ironic that a work which emphasises and italicises the assertion that *'accuracy is one of the most important attributes of the bibliographer'* should itself continue to exhibit a fair range of inaccuracies and inconsistencies.

We may have to put up with Bingley's idiosyncratic house style, but I would suggest that a more thorough editorial job is needed before a fifth edition is published: this fourth edition certainly exhibits a decline in standards.

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Library Technicians

LIBRARY TECHNICIANS IN AUSTRALIA (second national workshop 18-19 May 1979). Sydney: Library Association of Australia, NSW Branch. 1979. 84pp. $6.50 ($5 LAA members). ISBN 0 909915 72 5.

THE introductory papers to this workshop give an informative background to the education of library technicians in Australia and also include a brief history of recognition of courses in librarianship by the Library Association of Australia.

These papers were presented by a wide range of people in various fields of librarianship, all of whom have had direct experience with library technicians. Case studies of library technicians in Australian libraries, give detailed information as to salary scales and duties and expectations of library technicians.

The reports of the five discussion groups, whose leaders were actively involved in particular library areas, centered around the education, tasks, place in staffing structure and industrial awards of library technicians. The panel response to the discussion group reports commented on the important issues such as exit and entry levels, content of courses, tasks and awards. Emphasis was placed on the immediate need to accredit technician courses followed by the regular review of such courses.

In summing up, John Brudenall remarked on the fact that all participants had agreed that library tasks included a para-professional level of work — work best performed by the library technician. He proposed that consideration be given to the definition for use in industrial awards be 'a library technician is a person eligible for technician membership of the Library Association of Australia.'

Resolutions from post-workshop meetings of educators of library technicians and the national meeting of library technicians are also printed in these proceedings.

This publication would be useful to those technicians unsure of where they stand in the library structure and interesting reading for those involved with technician training or employment and a handy reference for background information on the history of the emergence of the para-professional in library circles.   *Faye Pattinson*
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Structures and plans

LIBRARY STRUCTURES AND STAFFING SYSTEMS / Malcolm Tunley. London: Library Association. 1979. 61pp. £3.95. ISBN 0 85365 771 8.
THE PLANNING APPROACH TO LIBRARY MANAGEMENT / Alexander Wilson. London: Library Association. 1979. 64pp. £3.95. ISBN 0 85365 522 7.

THE general introduction to this series of pamphlets: *Modern Management for Librarians* indicates that it is hoped to contrast strongly both in approach and content with traditional text books.

Mr Tunley has evidently take this to heart but, unfortunately, does not seem to have established what he intends to do instead. His introductory chapter states his premise that traditional management structures in libraries have reflected the classical hierarchical authority structure and goes on to point out a change in emphasis in some quarters toward alternative structures.

This is followed by chapters which consider in turn, the public, academic and special library. The study of academic libraries is the best of a not very good bunch in that it does at least get to grips with some of the problems facing libraries adopting alternative styles of management. The chapter on special libraries begins by professing that it cannot be written and then spends five pages trying to write it.

Mr Tunley concludes with a last ditch attempt to summarise the development of management theory in three pages.

It would appear that the constraints of the format have defeated the author. Sixty-four pages do not allow sufficient breadth to satisfy the student or sufficient depth to satisfy the professional librarian.

Mr Wilson also has not really appreciated the need for conciseness when writing in the pamphlet mode. His introductory chapter with bewildering changes of topic in mid paragraph left this reviewer groping for some signposts through the morass.

Whitman's poem which heads chapter two does little but take up valuable space but the

following material is far more organised and tightly written. This improvement continues and chapter four, the best in the pamphlet, presents a good succinct survey of planning systems and techniques. Unfortunately, the final chapter reverts to the initial style — a section sub-headed, standards and comparisons, takes in participative planning, cost benefit modelling techniques.

Both pamphlets have bibliographies which reflect the country of origin of the writers but which, given this caveat, presents a range of up-to-date references for further study.

However, at a recommended price of £3.95 for 64 pages neither of these works seem destined to become recommended reading for either student or professional librarian.
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Librarians — their own worst enemies

CAREER PATTERNS AND THE OCCUPATIONAL IMAGE / Margaret Slater. London: Aslib. 1980. ISBN 0 85142 122 9. Price unknown.

An important and ambitious study of career patterns and mobility set in the context of three images: public image, self image, employers' image. Organisational analysis, biograms, surveys, and a rather thin media analysis are used.

The book is well conceived, intelligent and worthwhile. It is also crafted in such a way that it will attract few readers. Even the summary is bitsy and the many sections and sub-sections are not integrated. Strongly recommended: ch. 2 (summary), ch. 6 (self-image) and pages 307-11 which have speculations on the possible origins of librarians' self images ideal for speeches and newsletters.

Three highlights, duly qualified in the text and in the 20-page summary: First — there is no consensus on the criteria of professionalism. In terms of what is actually done (which is not looked at), one probably cannot distinguish between librarians and information providers. But in terms of status, career patterns, self image and public image there is not a lot in common. Librarians move towards a bibliotherapist/educator image and are liked, mildly, by the public but not much by themselves or the information people. Information workers are seen as communicators/technical experts, with higher status in the field but less status in the public mind. Librarians are their own worst enemies. This point is hammered home again and again. Alas, those who still need to be told won't read this book, let alone use it.

Second — the users vs non-users dichotomy is probably all wet for most people. Library and information needs are intermittent and desultory. A rotational view of usage is nearer the truth. Slater does not realise that if this is so then there is no solid actual or potential constituency for librarians to nourish.

Third — 54 percent of both groups are dissatisfied with their job.

The book will unfortunately fall flat. Apart from not being well written it looks at the problems too much from the outside. Scott and Shore[1] will tell you why that won't do. The key methodology issue: how is, given dissensus, a definition of the 'librarian' vs 'information provider' sectors arrived at, and on what grounds could one decide as between conflicting concepts — is not addressed.
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1 Robert A. Scott and Arnold R. Shore, *Why Sociology Does Not Apply: A Study of the Use of Sociology in Public Policy*, Elsevier: New York 1979.