

tical terminology, express their grave concern about the quantity of modern publications and look forward to a computerized panacea which will solve all difficulties. The real scholarly problem, however, is not the issue of bibliographical recording but the question of one's ability to read all these books.

A work like the one under review which consists of thirty-seven independent papers shows a great variety of style, approach, working habits, and presentation. Because of this variety of treatment the need for coalescing the content in an all embracing and comprehensive index appears imperative. The last forty pages of this book, however, which are devoted to this task do not meet these requirements. It is most regrettable that the publisher placed the two editors under such a time pressure that they could not compile adequate access to the vast and important material contained in their book. We all know that the exhaustive index is the most important approach to the intellectual content of a book and that neither time nor money should be spared in giving fullest accessibility.

It would be unfair to close this review on such a critical note. The editors and contributors have provided a notable publication; for many years to come all librarians will depend heavily upon the Downs-Jenkins *Bibliography*.—*Felix Reichmann, Cornell University.*

70 Years of Best Sellers, 1895-1965. By Alice Payne Hackett. New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1967. xi, 280p. \$7.90. (67-25025).

Prompt recognition was accorded to Alice Hackett's records and comments on best sellers when her first compilation, *Fifty Years of Best Sellers*, appeared in 1946. A third edition now brings records of seventy years up to date, covering the years 1895-1965. This is a welcome continuation of the two preceding editions, the second one having been published in 1956.

Miss Hackett attempts to present information about American best sellers; she comments on and interprets, to some extent, statistics and trends but does not evaluate the titles from a literary point of

view. The book is divided into sections which deal with best sellers in hard bound and paperback form; best-seller subjects; best sellers by years; early best sellers; and books and articles about best sellers.

The reason for beginning the story about best sellers in the year 1895 is that it was in that year that the first best-seller lists were printed in the United States. Harry Thurston Peck, editor of the literary magazine, *The Bookman*, began to run each month the lists of best-selling books in a large number of cities. From the *Bookman* lists, annual best-seller lists were compiled, and in 1912 the *Publishers' Weekly* began a best-seller listing.

This year in which the first American best-seller lists were published was in the era of bicycles and the Gibson girl. Rural free delivery was begun in that year and this event was to have a notable effect upon merchandising of every kind, including the selling of books.

Best sellers are of interest to publishers for obvious reasons. When books have large sales, people who do not ordinarily buy books become aware of them and even purchase them. Sales stimulate sales. After book sales there are sales of subsidiary rights, especially movie and television rights. Other subsidiary returns to authors and publishers are condensation, magazine serialization, play production, book-club distribution, paperback reprint, and publication in foreign countries.

The over-all list of best sellers in this seventy-year compilation comprises titles which have sold one million copies or more. Highly publicized fiction, topical nonfiction, and children's books have usually had large sales. Best sellers of all times have included the Bible and books on religious themes, cookbooks, crime and suspense stories, novelty and game books, poetry and drama (the smallest group), reference books, and westerns.

The lists in this book are interesting and could well be the subject of many research studies. They provide insight into the thinking and emotions of a people and have more significance than a casual glance indicates. Social, political, economic, and philosophical undertones are implied and intermingled herein. Students of literary history could

trace public taste in these titles and in looking toward the future could use them as a starting point for speculation. The yearly lists in the present volume have more appeal for the student of social history and literary taste than the over-all lists because they reflect events, crises, and changing mores through a period of years.

Generally speaking, the popular book appeals to the reader because it is influenced by the same forces that shape the non-reading hours. A record of best sellers is a record of social history. Alice Payne Hackett has provided a valuable record and guide to source material in several fields in her *70 Years of Best Sellers*.—*Martha Boaz, University of Southern California.*

Raking the Historic Coals: The A.L.A. Scrapbook of 1876. By Edward G. Holley. (Beta Phi Mu Chapbook Number Eight) [Urbana, Illinois]: Beta Phi Mu, 1967. xv, 142p. \$6. (67-28354).

During 1876 the United States celebrated its centennial in a huge exhibition in Philadelphia. In October a group of this country's leading librarians (ninety men and thirteen women) came together in the City of Brotherly Love for three days, for the purpose of "mutual consultation and practical cooperation." *Raking the Historic Coals* presents by means of one hundred selected documents the story of the preparations for this conference which witnessed the founding of the American Library Association with Melvil Dewey being the first to sign the membership register.

The volume here under review is based on a scrapbook of letters, postcards, and printed documents called "Librarians' Conference, October, 1876" which the author-editor found at ALA headquarters while working on his award-winning biography, *Charles Evans, American Bibliographer* (University of Illinois Press, 1963). The scrapbook contains "216 items, mostly autograph letters, beginning with Justin Winsor's response of May 18, 1876, to a [Melvil] Dewey-[Frederick] Leypoldt letter about supporting a conference and concluding with the advance proofs from the first issue of the *American Library Journal* which described the Conference program for the meeting in Philadelphia, October 4-6, 1876."

From this "chief manuscript of our professional history," Mr. Holley has chosen seventy-four items; and from other contemporary sources (e.g., *American Library Journal, The Nation, Publishers' Weekly*), he has selected twenty-six items which complement and supplement the scrapbook documents. He has edited this material wisely and with discrimination, and has provided an informative and authoritative, interesting, and gracefully written introduction to the work.

Since many of the letters and postcards merely express approval of an interest in the conference-idea, only a representative sample of such communications is reproduced. Most of the letters "containing concrete suggestions for conference discussion, or relating to the major conference figures" are included.

The letters concerning topics for conference papers and discussion reveal that librarians in 1876 were interested in such matters, among others, as bibliography, cataloging and classification, copyright, distribution of public documents, indexing, library cooperation, qualifications of librarians, statistics. How familiar these topics sound in 1968—ninety-two years later! "There is no new thing under the sun."

Among those planning the conference or exchanging letters about it were Justin Winsor (Boston public library), William Frederick Poole (Chicago public library), Charles Ammi Cutter (Boston Athenaeum), Richard Rogers Bowker and Frederick Leypoldt (*Publishers' Weekly*), Charles Evans (Indianapolis public library), Lloyd Pearsall Smith (Library Company of Philadelphia), Ainsworth Rand Spofford (Library of Congress), and, of course, Melvil Dewey (Amherst College library). Their letters reveal much about these early library leaders—their healthy prejudices, their opinions of colleagues, their views on various library matters, their hopes for the conference.

Reading the letters of the great and the near-great, the well-known and the not-so-well-known, holds a certain fascination for many. Those in the library profession so fascinated will not want to miss reading these letters of librarianship's pioneers as they prepared for the 1876 meeting in Philadelphia. Librarians generally—library