

BOOK REVIEWS

A Primer of Comparative Librarianship/Sylvia Simsova. London: Clive Bingley. 95pp. £7.50 ISBN 0 85157 341 X.

A survey conducted by the reviewer in August 1981 showed that 7 out of 25 library schools in Australia were conducting courses in international and comparative studies, so a primer in this field is of increasing relevance to Australian students.

Written by an acknowledged authority on the basis of fourteen years' teaching experience of international/comparative courses, the book is designed to supersede part one of the author's *Handbook of comparative librarianship* (2nd ed. London: Clive Bingley, 1975), which has become a standard in the field.

The basic strategies for conducting a comparative study are provided with the beginner in mind and illustrated by two amusing examples making a pleasant change from the unimaginative theorising that characterises other books in the field.

The plethora of writing about international and comparative studies and paucity of truly comparative studies arise from an identity crisis within the field and herein lies the main problem in student use of Simsova's primer. Most international/comparative librarianship courses in Australia are conducted at either post-graduate or final year under-graduate levels; however, her prescriptive formulae for comparative studies are not sufficiently balanced with acknowledgement of the many alternative methodologies that litter the field and which should be fundamental to higher level discussion.

Much of her advice, such as on reading sources, would be obvious to most under-graduate students, yet at the opposite extreme, detailed study outlines are advocated

which would be more suitable for higher degree projects. Her bibliography provides a good introductory view of the field though with some important omissions of attempts to define international and comparative librarianship as independent areas of study, eg Parker J. Stephen 'International librarianship: a reconnaissance', *Journal of Librarianship*, Vol 6, no 4: 219-232, October 1974.

Like Simsova's more substantial *Handbook*, her *Primer*, even with its considerable limitations, will no doubt become the standard fare of international and comparative librarianship courses, and therefore merits consideration by the increasing band of Australian libraries interested in this exotic area of librarianship.

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The Social Sciences: the supply and demand for documentation and data: a report to UNESCO /ed J. Michael Brittain. London: Rossendale. 1982. 138pp. £11.50. ISBN 0 946138 00 1.

This book is based on a review sponsored by UNESCO in 1979, and previously reported only in a short article.* It is the latest in the long series of British reports on social science information which began with the ambitious INFROSS and DISISS reports of the early 70s. Eight chapters by various authors cover different disciplines and areas of practitioner activity. There is a deliberate concentration on practitioner areas: social welfare, social services, probation, local government, planning and social policy. The only major academic disciplines covered are economics, education and geography.

Most chapters give statistics of the supply of documentation and some information on the demands of users. Experienced special librarians in this field are not likely to find very much new concerning the literature of their subjects and the needs of their users, but the book does provide a review and documentary evidence which may be useful as a basis for planning and reporting.

While the report has a strong British orientation, its conclusions and recommendations are generally applicable. It confirms that academic social sciences are relatively well served by present library and information services, but that more selective, information-filtering services should be provided for practitioners, who greatly outnumber the

academics.

The major theme is frequently expressed, and in a way which some librarians will find unpalatable or disturbing:

The documents that applied scientists or social science practitioners would find the most helpful may not be in published form, or known about, or physically available (p1)

Practitioners require information and data rather than documents (and bibliographical references) (p124)

There are strong indications that improving the document supply to practitioners, by conventional library services, will not greatly improve the situation for them (p125).

The predictions of likely changes include suggestions for innovations (pp 132-134). This brief section may be the most important part of the report, if the germs of ideas which it contains stimulate special librarians to develop more appropriate services.

Alan Walker

*Roberts, SA and Brittain, JM 'Demand and supply patterns for documents and data in the United Kingdom'. *International Social Science Journal* 33 (1) (1981): 50-71.

July conference for ABN

THE ABN Network committee met on 8-9 December, 1982 and 16 February, 1983.

The December meeting was the last to be attended by Mr Jim Dwyer, Head of the South Australian Education Department Libraries Services Division, Mr Laurie Brown, State Librarian of Tasmania, and Miss Lyn Pollack, Librarian of the Law Courts Library, Sydney. Mr Dwyer was foundation Chairperson of the Network Committee.

At the February meeting Mr Arthur Ellis, Librarian, University of Western Australia, was elected Chairperson of the Network Committee. Mr Warren Horton, State Librarian of Victoria was elected deputy Chairperson. The February meeting was the first to be attended by Mrs Diana Higgins, Principal Librarian, Attorney-General's Department. Mrs Higgins was elected by ABN participants to the ABN Network Committee at elections held in December 1983.

At the February meeting it was decided to hold an ABN Conference in Melbourne on 13-14 July, 1983. The conference will be held in conjunction with the annual ABN Users Meeting, which will be held in the afternoon of 14 July. The conference will be open to all interested parties, with the attendance fee set at two levels, one for ABN participants, and one for non-participants. The ABN Users' Meeting will be open only to ABN participants. There will be no charge for attendance.

Details of the Conference cost and program have not yet been finalised. Further information will be available from the Conference organiser:

Dulcie Stretton Associates
70 Glenmore Road
PADDINGTON NSW 2021
Phone: (02) 357 6862, 331 5258

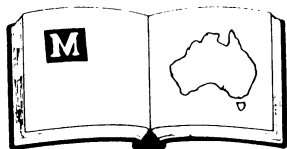
Bushfire appeal

The Chairman of the National Book Council regrets the misunderstanding that caused a request for books to be published.

Such an appeal conflicts with the basic philosophy of stocking libraries. In truth the appeal is for cash, and is still open.

Cash donations to date amount to slightly over \$1000. This journal will keep readers informed of the progress of the appeal.

Donations should be sent to:
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