

Book Reviews

Parnassus on Main Street: A History of the Detroit Public Library. By Frank B. Woodford. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965. 487p. \$9.50. (65-11820).

Relative to their role as custodians of our cultural heritage, librarians, as a group, show remarkably little interest in their own history. This is another way of saying that library histories, particularly histories of individual libraries, are not likely to be widely read. We tend to be progressive, forward-looking, pragmatic, to view the Golden Age as still ahead and only reluctantly cast our eyes backward at our unglamorous beginnings. Except as a source of colorful anecdote or utilitarian explanation of how-it-all-came-to-be, we are not likely to be concerned with library history for its own sake. Add to all this the fact that the historian of a particular library, even a great metropolitan library system, must necessarily deal with more local history than most readers wish to know about. These are indeed formidable barriers to readership.

In what terms then can one recommend a good book such as Frank Woodford has provided us, a centennial testimonial worthy of one of our great and widely influential public library systems? Mr. Woodford's qualifications are noteworthy. For over thirty years he has known Detroit as a newsman and chief editorial writer of the *Free Press*. During the past fifteen years he has produced six other books on Detroit and Michigan history, all but one of which was published by a university press. It is not surprising then that this work is backed by ample research and unobtrusively presents its story in its social, cultural, and political context. Especially striking is the author's skill in keeping his story moving ahead chronologically and, at the same time, dealing in some depth with major developments and issues. But, it may as well be admitted, that, through no fault of Mr. Woodford's, many readers will be better served by commencing to read with the chapter "Branching Out," about two-fifths of the way through, where the DPL clearly begins to emerge as one of our dynamic and prototypical library systems. In the chapters that follow, such as "Blood Money" (Andrew Carnegie's benefaction), "The Children's

Hour," "A Finger on the City's Pulse," "The Library Goes to War," "Days of Despair" (The Depression), and "Plowing New Fields," the clearly evident importance of the story heightens the interest.

This reader was disappointed that the chapter on "Thou Shalt Not Read" was not extended to include a fuller account of book selection policy, with discussion of its negative, as well as positive, aspects. Though by no means ignored, more could have been said about the diverse publics which the library serves. But the book should be judged in terms of what it does, not what it does not do. Mr. Woodford has provided a sound, well written book. The story he tells should increase in interest as, in the coming years, the broad range of services which have made the Detroit public library exceptional become a commonplace experience to all but the smallest communities.—*John C. Abbott, Edwardsville Campus, Southern Illinois University.*

Newspapering in the Old West; A Pictorial History of Journalism and Printing on the Frontier. By Robert F. Karlevitz. Seattle: Superior Publishing Company, 1965. 191p. \$12.95. (65-23450).

Librarians and bibliographers interested in the movement of the printing trades westward will find this volume a useful accession to their collections. The first press to enter the Trans-Mississippi territory was operated in Missouri in 1808, but only five other Western states had presses before mid-century. *El Mejicano* began publication in Nacogdoches in what is now Texas in 1813; *El Crepusculo de la Libertad* was established in Taos, New Mexico, in 1834; the *Cherokee Advocate* appeared in Oklahoma in 1844; both the *Californian* of Monterey and the *Oregon Spectator* of Oregon City began in 1846.

The migration of the printing trades toward the setting sun was difficult. Old presses and battered type were carried on wagons and keelboats, railroad cars and muleback, to assuage the insatiable appetite of early settlers for intelligences and other reading matter from the eastern lands they had forsaken. Newspapers with such colorful names as the *Guthrie Get Up*, the *Unterrified Democrat*, the *Arizona Silver Belt*, and the storied *Tombstone Epitaph*, sprang

into being in profusion in frame buildings, sod houses, tents, and adobe structures to meet the reading needs of the advancing populace.

The period was one of most vitriolic personal journalism, and many duels were fought between rivalling news factions; the story "is spiced with kidnapping, gunfire, pilfered presses, the drinking proclivities of Eugene Field and the promotional schemes of Horace Greeley." John H. Marion, editor of the *Prescott Miner*, once wrote in his columns of rival editor Judge William J. Berry of the *Yuma Sentinel* that "His first great care was to fill himself with whiskey, after which it was his custom to walk, like the swine that he is, on all fours to his den." Judge Berry, of course, replied in kind, reporting that "we had the extreme mortification of seeing the editor of the *Miner* . . . laid out in the refreshment room, dead drunk, with candles placed at his head and his feet, and a regular 'wake' held over him. It was then for the first time that we discovered Darwin's connecting link between the fish and the quadruped. As he lay with the drunken slobber issuing from his immense mouth, which extends from ear to ear, and his ears reaching up so high, everyone present was forcibly impressed with the fact that there was a connecting link between the catfish and the jackass."

The real value of *Newspapering in the Old West* does not lie, however, in its many colorful although undocumented anecdotes, nor in its fascinating although cursory narrative, for both of these features are better available elsewhere. The major contribution of the present volume is rather its avowed effort to bring together a broad selection of pictures illustrative of its topic. Anecdote and narrative serve only to knit halftone loosely to photograph and line etching to tintype, for the illustrations are excellent—all 347 of them. Printing offices, inside and out, editors, newsboys, banner heads, printing equipment, type-setters, all are presented in this excellent pictorial account of the printing press on its trek westward.—D.K.

The Past and Likely Future of 58 Research Libraries, 1951-1980: A Statistical Study of Growth and Change. By O. C. Dunn, W. F. Seibert, Janice A. Scheuneman. Lafayette, Indiana: University Libraries and Audio Visual Center,

Purdue University, 1965. 82p. (Together with "Second Printing, March 1966." [iii] 82p.)

This absorbing work might well have been dedicated to the late Fremont Rider. Nearly a quarter-century has passed since he astounded the library world with his classic demonstration that throughout their history American research libraries had doubled in size every sixteen years and, moreover, looked to continue to do so. Continue indefinitely? Patently impossible, as Rider agreed. This report, however, affirms that exponential growth still prevails, with no significant sign of slackening. Indeed, reasons are adduced for possible acceleration in the years just ahead.

The study is "credited, in part, to the availability of high-speed computers." Some nine thousand statistics for members of the Association of Research Libraries went into the analyses and projections presented by authors Dunn, Purdue's associate director of libraries, and his colleagues of Purdue's Instructional Media Research Unit. They derived for each library, for every fiscal year from 1950-51 through 1963-64, the figures for numerous categories of data. They have emphasized volumes held, volumes acquired, and total expenditures, but also examined several classes of expenditure, professional staff size, and the like. The statistics were then grouped for eight "composite" libraries: average, median, first and third quartiles, and four sub-groups according to size.

The steady growth in every case being clearly parabolic rather than linear, the "fitted curve" technique was employed to predict future levels. The resulting twenty-eight graphs are dramatic. Carried to 1980, all note approximate doubling periods: e.g., for size of the average composite library, seventeen years; for the median composite, fourteen to fifteen. (The rate for the composite fourteen largest libraries—eighteen to twenty years—hardly constitutes essential undermining of Rider's thesis.) Among other resounding findings for the average composite library: holdings in 1980 of 2.86 million volumes—or, via an alternate approach, 3.75 million—with acquisitions rates doubling every nine to twelve years, expenditures doubling every seven years. Throughout, the general picture is one of remarkable consistency, with noteworthy