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Book Review

Technical Information Center Administration, 2 Vols., edited by A. W. Elias, 1966; 171 and 169 pages. (London: Macmillan, 50s. and 52s. 6d.)

These are proceedings of two practical conferences held at the *Drexel Institute of Technology*, and the first volume for 1964 focuses attention primarily on the basic skills and services of technical information services, reporting on abstracting, public relations, staff administration, and related subjects. Of the 13 papers, only the two covering indexing and abstracting control (from representatives of the *Auerbach Corporation*), and one from Benjamin Cheydleur on computer management have really any significance for review in this Journal. One possible addition is the discussion by Alec Peters of the *Franklin Institute*. This paper covers cost control of information work, and it is an interesting application of computers; and although on the face of it this may appear to be a humdrum computer application, in fact basic conventional cost accounting is probably unknown in libraries.

Benjamin Cheydleur presents the sort of paper that all English librarians should be thinking towards—the problems that the librarian will face as data processing managers organizing a computer centre, its personnel, its systems, and its software; not really information retrieval, but one of the few papers anywhere that introduces the computer to librarians as librarians.

The second volume includes such fields as technical writing, internal publications, translating services, and user education, together with another of those necessary warning papers. E. H. Brenner discusses the control of quality of information

systems which must be maintained over quantity, and terms this type of choice as "equivocation"—which seems fair enough. This particular paper would have been very relevant to the theme of the Newman collection on compatibility to be reviewed.

Alan Rees contributes a very useful evaluation of evaluation methods, which notes the literature and covers problems of relevance and the weaknesses of design experiments.

The most pleasant discovery is the contributor who notes the countless economical and trouble-free systems that have functioned without failure for years. He is reporting from his own field of literature, and his paper is called "The giant mechanical brain in the crew-cut skull". He is none other than Frederik Pohl, and part of his contribution is the idea that information should be made to communicate itself. I think for once that reality has beaten science-fiction to the draw, because this is what an SDI scheme is ideally designed to do, and this is why librarianship should be an active profession, to give the systems which can provide Pohl with the information that he did not know he wanted.

Neither of these volumes is about the meta-methodology of information retrieval; they are both about the problems of running libraries and providing service. That far they are of some relevance, but they represent nothing new. TICA seems, however, to be a practical conference and one can imagine each of these papers generating much discussion. These proceedings could stand perhaps as transatlantic supplements to the ASLIB Handbook of special librarianship, with or without Frederik Pohl.

R. D. GEE