

successive editings of the basic text) in print for many years to come, and second, that the compiler will maintain his interest in the work and make certain that revisions are made to keep pace with changing technology, to incorporate fuller coverage, and to take advantage of further investigations throwing brighter light on past practices and personalities.

The volume, of course, is not without its share of inadvertencies—no first printing of a work of such colossal scope could hope to be. (What, exactly, is meant by the seemingly contradictory phrase “pure weak linseed oil” on p. 86?; surely Adam Ramage was not the builder of the first American-made printing press; William Ged’s stereotyped edition of Sallust is dated 1739, not 1744; and so on.) The criticism that the needs of an American user are not adequately met is obvious (“California case” and “Job case” would be useful entries, for example). There is a plethora of nonessential, sometimes downright useless, definitions which are either self-evident or readily to be found in any reasonably good dictionary (*oblong*, *bibliopegy*, *polished calf*). The listing of book clubs leaves much to be desired, especially in regard to American ones (only the Grolier Club is mentioned among the half-dozen extremely important American organizations that come easily to mind).

But there is nothing in the above that can—or is intended to—detract from the work in any substantial degree. This is truly an important addition to the literature of books and book-making, furnishing a reference tool that is unique in our language. It can be improved in later editions, but even if this never comes to pass there is no gainsaying the validity and value of Mr. Glaister’s contribution.—*Roland Baughman, Columbia University Libraries.*

## Reading Tastes

*Borrowings from the Bristol Library, 1773-1874; A Unique Record of Reading Vogues.* By Paul Kaufman. Charlottesville, Va., Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1960. 138p. \$5.00.

Scattered here and there throughout the length and breadth of New England, and

doubtless elsewhere in the United States, are ledgers in which have been recorded borrowings from the libraries to which they once belonged. These ledgers, not a few of which date back to the late eighteenth century, are arranged in one of two ways: In some, a page was assigned to each title held by the library, and upon it was recorded the name of each borrower and the dates of withdrawal and return; in others, the arrangement was by borrower’s name with listings, as in a bank ledger, of the titles withdrawn. The reviewer has long argued that these records might have some limited value as indices of reading taste during the years of their use.<sup>1</sup> Limited their value must be, first because in most instances the character of the borrowing public is not revealed, and second, because there is often no way of determining the character of the collection from which the loans were made: e.g., books on history may have been most heavily borrowed because more books on history were available for loan from the collection. Nonetheless, if used cautiously and interpreted judiciously, these registers do throw a little light on the reading interests of subscription library patrons during the early years of our country.

Mr. Kaufman, of the University of Washington Library, who had previously made a tabulation of the borrowings of Southey and Coleridge from the Bristol Library,<sup>2</sup> has now turned his attention to all the borrowings from that institution revealed in the five registers which span the years from August 23, 1773 to November 29, 1784.

The Bristol Library Society, a voluntary association of the type familiar to students of library history on this side of the Atlantic, was inaugurated in 1773, with a charter membership of 132 citizens who contributed one guinea annually to maintain the organization. Within a year the Society had acquired 574 titles—not an inauspicious beginning for early libraries of this type. Its subscribers came from the middle and upper-middle classes of Bristol society, thus its use reflects something of the reading tastes of an informed and thoughtful segment of a community with a long cultural tradition. In other words, it would seem to have been

<sup>1</sup> See the discussion of this problem in the reviewer’s *Foundations of the Public Library*. Chicago. University of Chicago Press, 1949, 114-123.

<sup>2</sup> *Modern Philology*, v. 21 (1924) 317-320.

quite comparable in its patronage to the Redwood Library at Newport, R. I. which had been organized a few decades earlier. It was, then, a library of the gentleman-scholar; the kind of library that reflects perhaps more accurately than any other type the reading tastes of its clientele.

Mr. Kaufman's little volume is devoted almost entirely to a tabular listing of the nine hundred titles held by the library between the years 1773 to 1784 and circulated for a total of 13,497 withdrawals. The titles, and the number of borrowings of each as recorded in the five registers, are classified in broad subject categories, viz: *theology, history* (including *antiquities* and *geography*), *philosophy, natural history* (including *chemistry*), *belles lettres, etc.* One can properly, we believe, question the wisdom of devoting 104 pages of a 138-page book to the publication of a table in which the forest is scarcely discernible for the trees, but Mr. Kaufman's eight pages of analysis are interesting and, in a limited way (which he is very careful not to exaggerate) revealing.

Of the nine hundred titles loaned more than 13,000 times, sixteen showed more than one hundred borrowings, and 119 titles were withdrawn only once, though this figure means little unless one knows the length of time each title was included in the collection. Obviously, a book that has been in a library for ten years has a much greater "exposure" to use than one that has been in the collection only a few weeks. Because no accession records are available, the inability to correlate circulation with accession points up the greatest fallacy in Mr. Kaufman's method. Nevertheless, Kaufman's analysis does tend to confirm some of the subjective observations made by the reviewer when he was studying the early social libraries on this side of the Atlantic. *History and travel* was by far the most popular subject, representing almost half of the total loans, but involving only one-fourth of all the titles, and exactly the same situation maintained in colonial New England despite our easy assumption that the typical Yankee was preoccupied with his spiritual salvation. Hawkesworth's *Voyages* appears to have been the most widely read volume, having circulated 201 times. It was followed by: (the numbers in parentheses indicate circulations)

Brydone. *Tour through Sicily* (192)  
 Chesterfield. *Letters to his Son* (185)  
 Hume. *History of England* (180)  
 Goldsmith. *History of the Earth* (150)  
 Raynal. *European Settlements* (137)  
 Robertson. *Charles V.* (131)  
 Sterne. *Tristram Shandy* (127)  
 Lyttleton. *Henry II.* (121)  
 Fielding. *Works* (120)

The Greek and Latin classics are only modestly represented, and of these, Cicero, represented by four titles, seems to have been the overwhelming favorite (a total of 148 borrowings). Medieval and Renaissance literature was conspicuously neglected. Susanah Dobson's *Life of Petrarch* was rather frequently borrowed (68 times), but Petrarch's own works, though they were in the collection, were largely ignored. Hoole's translation of *Ariosto* shows only 32 borrowings; had it been Harington's rendering, the score might have been higher, but then, *Rabelais* circulated only seven times. Representation of English literature is surprisingly modest. Sterne, Fielding, and Swift lead the pack, with Shakespeare a rather poor fourth, perhaps because many of these titles were in the private libraries of the members of the Society. Statistics for poetry are so low as to be inconclusive, though such writers as Mrs. Barbauld and Akenside enjoyed more popularity than seems justified by their present-day reputations. Again, the low scores of such writers as Pope and Thomson may be explained by their presence in personal libraries.

In any final analysis, perhaps the most striking value of the Kaufman study is its demonstration of the general similarity of reading tastes in the English-speaking world on both sides of the Atlantic. Americans were cousins of the British intellectually and culturally as well as genealogically. The Bristol Library that Kaufman has investigated could well have been in Bristol, Connecticut. In the reviewer's opinion this is the most important conclusion supported by the Kaufman "findings," and it is unfortunate that he has not mentioned it in the pages of his study.

Though quite properly modest about the results of his work, Kaufman emphasizes that it is only a "pilot" investigation; his recommendations that the inquiry "should be car-

ried on by all means to" a later date (p. 138) and that "refinement should, however, be considered by future investigators," (p. 127) seem questionable. The basic data is so imperfect and so statistically unreliable that any attempt to use them as more than indicators of the most general hypotheses would be misdirected "scholarship." Nevertheless, *Borrowings from the Bristol Library* has a modest utility and there must have been good fun in its making.—*Jesse H. Shera, School of Library Science, Western Reserve University.*

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL of Library Science of the University of Texas has announced the availability of four scholarships, one for one thousand and three for five hundred dollars, to be awarded for the academic year, 1961-62. Application forms may be obtained from the director's office and the deadline for applications is March 15, 1961.

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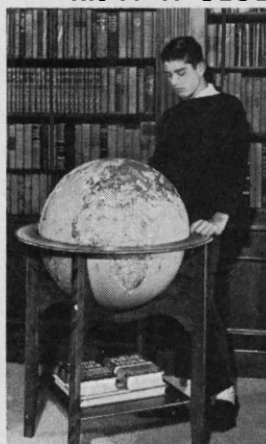
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