

Ladd, Boyd. *National Inventory of Library Needs, 1975*. Resources Needed for Public and Academic Libraries and Public School Library/Media Centers. A Study Submitted by Boyd Ladd to the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, March 1977. Washington: Govt. Print. Off., 1977. 275p. \$3.60. LC 77-8216.

What an infuriating grab bag of a volume this is! If only it had been called "A Source Book of Resource Data Collected by LIBGIS" or some such title rather than *National Inventory of Library Needs*; the one title so modest, the other so certain, so sure.

The book is a compilation of public libraries', school library/media centers', and academic libraries' data reported in the 1974 and 1975 LIBGIS surveys to the National Center for Education Statistics. The data are then compared with standards "to the degree that professional deliberation has provided some consensus on the levels 'needed.'" Then projections of "need" are made.

To concentrate on academic libraries: Did you know that a one-time expenditure of \$1.5 billion would buy us all the books we are missing and that we would only also have to increase our annual expenditure by about a third, from \$300 million to \$400 million a year, and we could keep steady? Yet did you also know that, in total, collections in academic libraries are 99 percent "adequate" but that two-year colleges are 50 percent "adequate" and public four-year colleges are exactly 100 percent "adequate"; that private universities are 177 percent "adequate," while public universities are only 111 percent adequate? What a mistake to qualify an absolute term like "adequate," and what nonsense the results!

What I've tried to illustrate in the above examples is the wisdom of a comment made by Boyd Ladd, the compiler, in his preface: "Interpretive analysis has intentionally been limited, in the expectation that many analyses will and should be made from different philosophic stances."

Now, therefore, my philosophic stance, again concentrating on academic libraries:

1. The data, inasmuch as we have learned to count things consistently, are fine. Mr. Ladd's compilations and

tables are excellent, diligent, and comprehensive.

2. The data are not strong enough to withstand the analysis thrust upon them, and the misinterpretations that are bound to follow when budget officers get their hands on them.
3. The standards are wrong and, in some cases, have been specifically discredited. Current knowledge and the results of work, such as the Pittsburgh work on collection use, the "inventory law," and so on, have not yet been incorporated into "official" standards.
4. The standards and the data must be improved before such analyses can be made.
5. The standards are all input standards. What is needed is a performance standard, the technique for the attainment of which will vary from library to library. That is, some will need to invest in collections, others in interlibrary loan, others in on-line retrieval, others in student instruction, and so on.
6. I propose the following performance standard: 90 percent of all requests made of the library satisfied within forty-eight hours.

In fairness, I have to say that both Al Trezza in his foreword and Ladd in his preface recognize the shortcomings and weaknesses. They rightly see the work as being stimulative of further work, particularly in the essential field of user studies. As Trezza says in his foreword:

The extensive data will no doubt suggest some relationships and interpretations not expected, and lead to some hypotheses which challenge the conventional wisdom in our profession. Resulting questions are expected to stimulate further analysis leading to a better understanding of the resources appropriate to effective library and information services.

This compilation is probably the most important book of the year. We should all buy it, read it, understand it; and then sit down and have a good long think.—Glyn T. Evans, Director of Library Services, State University of New York, Albany.

McCullough, Kathleen; Posey, Edwin D.; and Pickett, Doyle C. *Approval Plans and Academic Libraries: An Interpre-*

**ive Survey.** A Neal-Schuman Professional Book. Phoenix, Ariz.: Oryx Press, 1977. 154p. \$11.95. LC 77-8514. ISBN 0-912700-05-X.

*Approval Plans and Academic Libraries: An Interpretive Survey* provides a much-needed source for the practitioner. The primary purpose of the study is the determination of the state of the art among academic libraries. These findings are then compared to the approval plan experience at Purdue University.

The authors represent a rather unique team of two librarians and a businessman, each recognized and respected for long-term contributions to the profession.

The book describes the results of the survey that was mailed to 144 academic libraries (101 responding) and analyzes the material in both detailed and summarized formats in seven sections. The interpretation of these results offers probably the most valuable and intriguing part of the book. The design of the research methodology and information gathering questionnaire and the independent evaluation and interpretation of the findings are both significant achievements.

McCullough points to the fact that the survey was not concerned with acquisitions routines but focused instead on the function of approval plans in collection development. She says that an approval plan is ultimately a collection development tool and only incidentally an acquisitions device. She discusses the various difficulties brought out by the survey respondents and contrasts procedures and problems encountered by libraries, whether having centralized or decentralized collections. Her sharp observations and analytical solutions should be of great interest to the reader.

Posey writes from the subject-specialist viewpoint. He looks on approval plans as a great asset to collection development programs and as an attractive labor saving tool. He is amused by the critics of approval plans who claim that such an approach to collection development is inferior. Posey defends approval plans, point by point, and justifies his reasons with convincing arguments. He states that the engineering library at Purdue purchases books for two reasons: (1) to support teaching and research and (2) to build an archival col-

lection for the use of retrospective researchers. These reasons are well met by the approval plan at that institution.

The suppliers' view is presented by Pickett's *Response*. Pickett underscores the fact that the approval plan concept has long suffered from a basic misunderstanding of its intent, unrealistic expectations of its strengths, and little attention to any limitations. He emphasizes the importance of profile design. Without a good profile and knowledge of its application, the best plan is certain to encounter difficulties. His comments and perceptions may be most helpful in creating a better understanding and stronger relationship between libraries and vendors.

The publication is largely a presentation of library practices in matters of approval plans. The information it contains should prove helpful to individual institutions seeking to establish comparative guidelines of common procedures. Approval plans are, however, unique institutional experiences from which helpful interpretations and generalized conclusions can be drawn, but cautiously applied.

The book principally addresses approval plans as a collections-development device and a vendor service, which fact makes this work valuable and attractive to a wide range of readership. It is well written, carefully organized, and has a rather complete bibliography on the topic. For these reasons, *Approval Plans* should be considered a significant and major contribution to the field.—Peter Spyers-Duran, Director of the University Library, California State University, Long Beach.

International PRECIS Workshop, University of Maryland, 1976. **The PRECIS Index System: Principles, Applications, and Prospects.** Proceedings of the International PRECIS Workshop, Sponsored by the College of Library and Information Services of the University of Maryland, October 15-17, 1976. Edited by Hans H. Wellisch. New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1977. 211p. \$12.50 U.S. and Canada; \$15.00 other countries. LC 77-1932. ISBN 0-8242-0611-8.

Unlike many proceedings volumes, this one was well worth publishing. The work reported is both new and significant, the