Review Articles

Yale's Selective Book Retirement Program. By Lee Ash. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1963. xii, 94p. $4. (63-17389).

This is the interesting report of a three-year study that was financed by a grant of $150,000 from the Council on Library Resources. There is a Preface by James T. Babb; a Foreword by John H. Ottemiller, who directed the project; and a Concluding Statement by Professor Raymond D. Morris. The working papers and the longer report by Mr. Ash from which this printed volume was abstracted are available at Yale for consultation.

The difficulties of selective retirement are not minimized, and the claims made for it are modest. Mr. Babb writes, "Although we believe that our Selective Book Retirement offers a palliative to the increasing space problem in research libraries, we recognize that it is not a solution." Professor Morris observes that the selection of books for retirement "is time-consuming, requiring the best judgment that we can muster, which means that it is an expensive program. It could very well turn out that it will prove so expensive in execution that (as with microreproduction) there will be a point beyond which it will not be feasible in terms of economy."

In view of this economic question, it might have been desirable to include a more rigorous analysis of costs. During the course of the project, 74,648 volumes were transferred from the main stacks to storage by size, 28,443 were discarded, 17,259 were transferred to other libraries (2,572 of these to libraries outside the university), and 14,188 new acquisitions were sent directly to storage. Adding these, and dividing their total of 134,538 into the $81,936.60 spent for salaries of the processing staff for the project, the report concludes that processing cost 61¢ per volume. The 14,188 new acquisitions, however (except for some of the new theses), were not handled by this staff, and the cost that is reported includes nothing for materials, for 95,777 photoclerk ex-posures, for space occupied by the project staff, or, apparently, for refiling cards.

Space in the main stack is calculated to be worth $1.68 per volume; space in storage comes to 42¢ per volume. On this basis, the library saves $1.26 on space for each volume transferred to storage; but, if processing takes 61¢ or more, then selection, requiring consideration by faculty or high level professional personnel, might indeed cut the total saving to a minute sum. The report notes that it is easy at the beginning of such a program to deal with subjects of little interest to the university's teaching and research, but, "As those subjects are completed, the selecting becomes more time consuming and difficult; and, as the staff moves to subjects that are heavily used, hours of work produce but meager results." When one considers what it costs to store a book by size (42¢ for space, plus 61¢ or more for processing, plus high priced time for selection), one begins to wonder if a book worth that much is not worth the whole $1.68 that it is now taking on accessible and classified shelves.

Obviously, then, this is a significant chapter in the story of storage, but no means the last one.—*Edwin E. Williams, Harvard University.*

Methods of Information Handling. By Charles P. Bourne. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1963. xiv, 241p. $12.95. (63-20628).

It is difficult for a textbook writer to review the work of a colleague who has written a text in the same field. If there is overlap, it can be said that the overlap is unnecessary; if different material is presented, it can be said that there is unnecessary detail; if material has been omitted, that can also be criticized. Obviously, the reviewer has used his best judgment in his own work, and therefore his review might tend to be overly critical.

But try as I might, it was not possible to be anything but glowing about this excellent book. The Bourne book is a good one; it