

with the selection of bibliographies nor with their relative importance but this volume should nonetheless be a useful tool in training new searchers and should be especially useful in small and medium-sized libraries. Large libraries might well wish for a greatly expanded list of bibliographies containing fuller information. All libraries might question the value of the comparison of searchers' markings and outstanding order file arrangements, although this might be valuable in the classroom. A new edition might include an introduction containing general searching principles as well as a chapter on modifications in searching and problems encountered with computerized order records.—*Connie Dunlap, University of Michigan.*

The Brothers Harper. By Eugene Exman. New York: Harper & Row, [1965]. xvi, 415pp. \$7.95. (65-14651).

Welcoming a businessman's history of his firm in which factual data is thoroughly explored, well organized, and carefully documented—such is a rare pleasure, surprisingly rare indeed even for the output of so literate a group as publishers. Mr. Exman, recently retired as a vice president of Harper's has here retold the story of the firm from its beginnings around 1820 to the disastrous fire of 1853. He approaches his subject with great seriousness of purpose and with an almost Germanic propensity for raw data—evidence rather than hypotheses, details rather than conclusions, names rather than personalities. His presentation is long and involved, but in time it comes to impress one as being specially appropriate to its subject.

Mr. Exman's announced objective is "to keep green the memory of the four brothers and their extraordinary partnership." After contemplating their sullen faces and reading about their uneventful careers, one is led to conclude that Mr. Exman is indeed a good organization man. Not that his heroes are without glory: they carved their niche in our country's cultural history with a shrewdness which one can not help but admire. Working quietly and with a unity of purpose, they formed a powerful dynasty: so far as we will ever know, their four wives never fought, and nephews when they came of age were taken into the firm

with no grumblings from their uncles. Mr. Exman has tried his best to discover the individualities of the four brothers—Fletcher the friend of authors, Wesley the printer, John the bookkeeper, James the personnel manager—but their uncommunicative ways leave us agreeing with their adage that "any one of us is Harper, and the other three are the brothers."

What was their commitment to the cultural world they served? Why did they deal in books, rather than in nails or mortgages or potatoes? What was their attitude toward the content of their editions? Did they believe in virtue rewarded, naively equating literary merit with large profits? Or did they see irreconcilable extremes, in the manner of some pessimistic Romantic dichotomy, their strategy being one of compensating for a few good works with a mass of potboilers? Did they believe in a "long haul" theory, balancing in their catalogue the probable immediate favorites with the potential long-term classics? Or were they satisfied to leave all such matters to the gods and the critics, issuing almost anything and predicating their firm's growth on new audiences—such as were quickly developing in the West and through their own school district series? Such questions, however simplified and rhetorical, reflect on the larger question which we must ultimately ask about any publishers—in what ways were they a cause, and in what ways merely an effect, of the cultural life of the public they served?

"The secret of a successful book house was to play the part of the benefactor of the man of letters"—such is the dictum of William Tryon (*Parnassus Corner*, p. 101), and while James T. Fields broadcast it widely and convincingly enough to carry his firm to a remarkable success, it also carried him down to the depths of a fearsome battle with one of his disgruntled authors, the redoubtable Gail Hamilton. In comparison, the assault on Harpers, by Theodore Sedgwick Fay, described by Mr. Exman, approaches slapstick. In their external dealings, the Harpers were usually too clever to leave themselves vulnerable to serious attack; and, within the firm, they changed quietly with the times, in contrast to the violent personal upheavals of Fields' later business career. Fields preached end-

lessly and argued persuasively for the cause of culture; but it was probably Harpers whom authors knew as the firm that spoke with its pocketbook.

This we may suspect, but can never prove: the Harpers knew all too well that good business required holding one's cards close to one's chest. (Among Mr. Exman's least successful chapters, for instance, is his sixth, in which he attempts to demonstrate how his firm "launched" American authors.) In the absence of much evidence to the contrary, we must presume that the record of Harpers is best reflected in its publishing record: the brothers were astute, hard-working, and relatively scrupulous businessmen, whose diversified competences included the selection of good literary texts, but whose modest intellectual accomplishments and interests discouraged them from providing much of any cultural leadership. Mr. Exman is thus both justified and successful in preparing a book that never inspires a warm veneration or sympathy for the brothers, but passively and cumulatively induces a cold respect for their ability to flourish in one of the more formidable areas of the business world.—*Donald W. Krummel, The Newberry Library.*

Focus on Information and Communication. Ed. by Barbara Kyle. London: ASLIB, 1965. viii+113p. 14s.

Recently, according to Miss Kyle's introduction to this volume, ASLIB sponsored a conference on classification as an interdisciplinary study at which papers were presented in such diverse fields as botany, mathematics, and anthropology. The interdisciplinary approach to classification aroused so much interest that Miss Kyle has brought together a collection of seven papers, by six scholars, from widely differing areas of research as "a further attempt to provide for ASLIB members a selection from authors in peripheral fields and to introduce these authors to each other and to ASLIB's field of endeavour." The philosophy behind this collection is characteristic of the work of ASLIB members whose approach to classification has always been more interdisciplinary than that of their American colleagues. However, the conference held at Syracuse University last July

on the sociological foundations of access to knowledge may hopefully be regarded as suggesting that American librarianship is beginning to tend more toward the interdisciplinary view.

Only three of the seven papers in this collection have been previously published, and none is by a librarian, though all have something of importance to say to librarians, and such serious students of British librarianship as Foskett, Farradane, and Miss Kyle herself are deeply indebted to their authors.

The collection opens with an essay by Rupert Crawshay-Williams on a linguistically based method for resolving controversies in science and the philosophy of science as to the correctness of empirical statements or judgments when the facts themselves are not in dispute. The relevance of this essay to classification theory lies in the insight it can give for the answering of such questions as: Is mathematics to be classified with the sciences? Is a species a natural group or a construct of the human mind?

The second paper in the series (by James K. Feibleman) on the integrative levels in nature and in the sciences, and the technological applications that derive from them, has strongly influenced D. J. Foskett's studies of the integrative levels in bibliographic classification.

Perhaps more obviously related to library problems than some of the other essays in this volume are the two on computers. The first, by A. R. Meetham of the National Physical Laboratory at Teddington, deals with the problems of developing machine-generated indexing vocabularies. The essay by W. T. Williams of the faculty of the University of Southampton on "Computers as Botanists" is an exposition of the advantages offered by the computer in the performance of certain intellectual tasks, particularly that of extracting from a complex mass of data some underlying pattern or formulation of general principles. His essay could as well have been entitled "Computers as Classifiers." He finds, however, that man enjoys three advantages over the computer "which he may well retain even into the far distant future"—he weighs less than any computer yet designed; he requires far less energy than does the computer; and he