BOOK NOTICES

Denis Reynolds. *Library automation: issues and applications.* **New York: Bowker, 1985. 615 pp. £42. ISBN 0-8352-1489-3.**

This excellent book provides a sound overview of library automation. It is divided into three sections: "History and background", "Planning and preparation", and "Applications". Within these divisions, online retrieval services, technical support systems, online catalogues and bibliographic utilities are discussed. The style of presentation is clear and very readable, and the book includes a detailed index. This volume should provide a valuable addition to the list of books available to the student of library automation, although it should be noted that it has relatively little to say about in-house information retrieval systems. It should prove equally useful to the practising librarian who wants a well-written and thoughtful introduction to the subject. The author supplies numerous examples, not surprisingly almost all drawn from a North-American context.

Peter Laurie. *Databases: how to manage information on your micro.* **London: Chapman and Hall, 1985. 138 pp. £8.95. ISBN 0-412-26380-7.**

This introduction to database management is aimed at the amateur who might want to set up a database on a business or home microcomputer. As such, it is clearly written in an entertaining style with ample photographs, illustrations and diagrams to aid the reader. It begins in the first chapter with a discussion of computer hardware and software. This is followed by an examination of database manager software, including such topics as hashing, serial indexes and B-tree indexes which are all explained in terms intelligible to the non-professional. The third chapter considers the use of a database manager, including data entry, data security, searching and deleting data. The fourth chapter looks at multi-file databases, and discusses both relational and hierarchical databases. Enquiry languages for programming within the database manager are discussed in Chapter 5. The final two chapters briefly deal with costs and artificial intelligence (including expert systems) as applied to databases.

A.E. Cawkell, ed. *Handbook of information technology and office systems.* **Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1986. 996 pp. $95. ISBN 0-444-87907-2.**

This *Handbook* considers the basic financial, engineering, political and human problems of information technology. Section 1, "Information technology explained", looks at the basic technology of information technology—semi-conductors, digital

computing, telecommunications, electronic processing and delivery of documents, expert systems and artificial intelligence. "Information and library science" is the topic of Section 2, which provides a survey of applications in libraries and offices, personal information systems, the man-machine interface and online information systems. Microcomputer information systems, office systems, videotex and micro-form systems are the subjects of Section 3, while Section 4 looks at the social and political issues. International information and telecommunications policies from the viewpoint of a number of countries are examined in Section 5. The final section, "The leading edge", looks at the new developments which are now influencing information technology. The editor has also supplied a selective, classified product list which provides a wide variety of information on a range of products, the addresses of product suppliers, a list of abbreviations, a glossary and an index. The first half of the book is written by the editor, while the remainder is the responsibility of over twenty authors from Britain, West Germany, Switzerland, the United States and Japan. No attempt has been made to standardize the typefaces used, the absence or presence of line justification, spacing, etc., all of which detract from the readability of this long and expensive volume.