

MORE TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Third Conference on Technical Information Centre Administration

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Aug. 29—Sept. 1, 1966. Edited by A. W. Elias. Pp. vii+135. (New York: Spartan Books; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd, 1967.) 75s.

CONFERENCES on technical information are nowadays in almost permanent session, and most of them result in published proceedings. All too often the publication is a medley of unrelated papers that would find much more satisfactory homes in journals. The conference reviewed here did have a central theme: to present for discussion, in capsule form, the material commonly taught in the Drexel course on information science. The collected papers do therefore serve as an introductory text on this subject, and can be read as a whole with some profit.

The course is concerned with practical procedures used in technical information centres, and covers library resources, indexes, abstracts, and equipment (the latter ranging from catalogue cards to computers). A final paper sketches in the analysis and design of information systems.

Most of the eight authors are internationally known in the documentation field and present their surveys lucidly and with authority. As is to be expected, experienced readers will not find much that is new, but for librarianship students, or for scientists newly involved in setting up information centres, the book provides a useful summary of techniques. The literature references are almost exclusively to American experience.

B. C. VICKERY

NEGLECTED HOMOSEXUALS

Homosexuality

By D. J. West. Third edition. Pp. 304. (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., Ltd, 1968.) 35s. net.

HUMAN sexual behaviour is not quite as taboo a topic as when Havelock Ellis and Freud were shocking the Edwardians. Nevertheless, there is very little serious research being carried out in this country, either on human sexual behaviour in general, or on specific sub-areas such as homosexuality. The result is that a most important area of human behaviour is largely left to the mercies of the literary artists, the clergy and the popular press. Opinion is rife and fact rare.

More than ten years ago, Donald West, a psychiatrist by training and a staff member of the Cambridge Institute of Criminology, produced the first edition of the present book in an attempt to give a dispassionate account of the known evidence concerning homosexuality, its probable incidence, social aspects, legal problems, theories and evidence on causation, and possibilities for treatment. In this, the third edition, he has brought up to date his coverage of the original topics, and has added a useful section on lesbianism, as well as expanding the section on treatment to include recent attempts to apply behavioural techniques, such as aversion therapy. If this book is judged as having been produced for the wider non-scientific audience, in an attempt to debunk some widespread prejudices concerning homosexuality, to indicate the major research problems and to give a rapid overview of much of the scattered evidence, then it is outstandingly successful. Judged, on the other hand, as a potential major contribution to scholarship then, by the usual standards of scientific evidence, it falls somewhat short. Despite explicit warnings of the need to separate description from explanation, and for reliable evidence rather than opinion, West makes many *ex cathedra* statements for which the evidence is "clinical experience"

rather than controlled observation or experiment. For instance, "the typical paedophile is a timorous, inhibited male" (page 115) and "the appearance of partners counts more in the sexuality of men than women" (page 132). There is even the occasional polemic—"society gets the homosexuals it deserves"—a reference to the view that legal and social proscription drives many homosexuals into the more extreme forms of dress and mannerism. The section on treatment is the one most marked by personal bias. Psychotherapy is considered appropriate for young men with fair prospects of cure, those who are married and those who insist on treatment, while behaviour therapy (usually involving the pairing of an aversive stimulus such as mild electric shock with the homosexually arousing stimulus) is reserved for the "anti-social" such as paedophiles, and the "neurotically guilty". There seems no good reason for this discrimination against behaviour therapy, particularly as it is more effective than psychotherapy and less time consuming.

In conclusion, this book contains much legal and social good sense, a valuable though insufficiently critical review of the available evidence and theories concerning aetiology, and some special pleading and polemics. Compared with much of the previous literature on homosexual behaviour it is a model of scholarship; a definitive work on the psychological study of human sexual behaviour in general and of deviant sexual behaviour in particular has yet to be written.

M. P. FELDMAN

University News

Dr K. B. Haley has been appointed to the chair of operational research in engineering production and **Dr E. G. Knox** to the newly established second chair of social medicine in the **University of Birmingham**. The title of professor of human genetics has been conferred on **Dr J. H. Edwards**, reader in human genetics in the Department of Social Medicine.

Dr James D. Robertson has been appointed to a personal chair in anaesthetics in the **University of Edinburgh**.

Professor W. F. H. Jarrett has been appointed to the chair of veterinary pathology in the **University of Glasgow**. He succeeds **Professor J. W. Emslie**.

Professor Charles A. Whitney has been appointed professor of astronomy at **Harvard University**. He will continue as physicist at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, a position he has held since 1956.

Professor A. J. Cain, University of Manchester, has been appointed to the Derby chair of zoology in the **University of Liverpool**.

Dr J. B. Hasted, University College, London, has been appointed to the chair of experimental physics at **Birkbeck College**, London, and **Dr E. A. Wright**, St Mary's Hospital Medical School, has been appointed to the chair of morbid anatomy tenable at **King's College Hospital Medical School**, London.

Appointments

Dr Winifred M. Watkins, reader in biochemistry, has been appointed to succeed **Professor W. T. J. Morgan** as head of the Department of Biochemistry at the **Lister Institute of Preventive Medicine**.

The following have been appointed members of the **Medical Research Council**: **Sir Brian Windeyer**, professor of radiology (therapeutics) at the Middlesex Hospital, dean of the Faculty of Medicine and chairman of the Academic Council of the University of London, and **Mr David Marquand**, MP for the Ashfield Division of Nottingham. Sir Brian has also been appointed chairman of the MRC Clinical Research Board.