The Function of Bibliography, by Roy Stokes. London, England: André Deutsch, 1969. 174 p. £1.50 (New York: Seminar Press, 1971. \$5.75)

We are told in the publisher's 'blurb' that this book is "a survey of a revolution which has taken place in the study of literary texts," and that it is aimed at the non-specialist. The problem is that "function" and "survey" are not the same thing, and trying to outline the function by giving an historical survey at times defeats both purposes. A great deal of space is given to repeating old arguments that are water under the bridge; for example, the 1903 argument on "bibliographical pedantry" between J. D. Brown and A. W. Pollard is given fully in thirteen pages of uncut, direct quotation. In a book of only 170 pages this is surely disproportionate.

Professor Stokes adopts a wide definition of the subject, and attempts "to indicate the function of bibliography through the activities, the problems, the utility and the practice of the constituent parts." Some chapters stray from this by going into historical progress, while other chapters, such as those on critical and descriptive bibliography, stick more closely to the functions of the disciplines. Emphasis is quite properly given to the work of Greg, Pollard, and Bowers, and Stokes quite rightly states that "critical rather than descriptive bibliography is the key to the whole issue. Once a book has been understood bibliographically and is capable of explanation, the description of the item does not raise major problems."

The book makes the non-specialist aware of the complexities of even the most apparently simple operations. For example, Stokes discusses the real problems of alphabetical arrangement, pointing out the differences between the "word-by-word" arrangement and the "all-through" arrangement, showing the non-specialist that under one system 'New England' comes before 'Newark' and in the other system the reverse is true. However, I have some trouble identifying the non-specialist for whom this book is intended. In a field as large as bibliography, ranging from the classification of watermarks to cataloguing, we are all non-specialists in many areas outside our own narrow specializations.

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