

the field of information theory, the book does contain a great deal of practical information. It explores alternative ways to convey information (through words, plans, pictograms and so forth) and discusses such technical matters as typography, spatial arrangement, layout and colors.

It is a concise book, perhaps too much so for the exhibits professional. Its greatest fault is that it is poorly illustrated; one frequently wishes for a picture demonstrating a particular statement. The few pictures it has are often poorly reproduced and amateurish. For a book on design, its own design is terrible. It is also expensive, but the information it presents seems worth the price.—*Louis F. Gorr*

## Art in Basic Education

By Jacques Barzun and Robert Saunders. Occasional Paper 25, Council for Basic Education, Washington, D.C., 1979. 31 pp., \$1.

The Council for Basic Education was founded in 1956 to strengthen teaching and learning in the basic intellectual disciplines—English, mathematics, science, history, geography, government and foreign languages. In 1975 the arts were specifically added as an important component of basic education. But some still raise the question, Where do the arts fit in?

*Art in Basic Education* addresses this question with two papers. In a provocative paper entitled "Art and Educational Inflation," Jacques Barzun, university professor emeritus at Columbia University, challenges the teaching profession to take a hard look at itself. He claims that those in charge of the school system, who are trained to work with and disseminate ideas, are confused, and that public discontent is increasing. He notes that the confusion about goals has been compounded by a multitude of objectives and guidelines, and by pretentious slogans designed to justify art's place in the curriculum. It should be justification enough to say that art is "an important part of our culture. It corresponds to a deep instinct in man . . . it is enjoyable."

Barzun wants educators to think seriously about what they are doing and for whom. Educators cannot give an education, he insists; rather, they

should teach what is teachable and provide the experiences that lead to knowledge. His straightforward approach applies to the teaching of all basics, and he makes an excellent case for including art among them.

In "Plain Talk About Art in Basic Education," Robert J. Saunders, art consultant to the Connecticut State Department of Education, describes a variety of valid techniques and approaches to teaching art and makes a case for the full-time art teacher. By providing strategies for teaching art, Saunders' paper complements the Barzun piece. The discussion is clear and logical, and teachers should find his suggestions helpful. (A bibliography follows the two papers.)

*Art in Basic Education*, although rich in content for a short work, fails to set forth a cohesive plan of action to ensure that art or the arts will become an integral part of basic education.—*Carolyn P. Blackmon*

## What If You Couldn't . . . ?

### A Book About Special Needs

By Janet Kamien. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1979. 83 pp., illus., \$7.95.

A small but valuable book, Janet Kamien's *What If You Couldn't . . . ?* provides insight into the problems, needs and feelings of handicapped people. As associate director of the visitor center of the Children's Museum of Boston, Kamien has developed programs for adults and children with special needs. During her work on an exhibit about handicaps, she interviewed handicapped people to find out what they wanted other people to know. They responded, "Tell kids and their parents that we are doing fine and that we don't need pity. Tell them they can ask questions and they don't need to be afraid. . . . Tell them not to have hurt feelings if we don't need their help."

Kamien shares her knowledge about disabilities and asks the reader to assume a variety of roles and participate in experiments to better understand how it feels to have a physical, emotional or learning impairment. The clear, concise text discusses characteristics of particular handicaps and the skills and special aids needed to overcome them. Illustrations by Signe Hanson complement the text.

*What If You Couldn't . . . ?* provides the uninitiated with a sensitive introduction to the problems of the handicapped. It is useful as a tool for

teaching children about "values" as a resource for planning and evaluating public educational programs.—*Carolyn P. Blackmon*

## Museums in Motion

By Edward P. Alexander. American Association for State and Local History, 1979. 308 pp., illus., hardbound \$12.95 (\$9.75 to members), paperbound \$7.95 (\$6.00 to members).

At last we seem to be entering an era of appreciation for the history of various cultural institutions and their earliest collections and found. Recent exhibitions at the Ashmolean of Oxford, the British Museum and the Smithsonian reflect this trend. In order to evaluate where the museum profession is today, it is important to understand where we have been.

*Museums in Motion*, which examines the history and major functions of museums and assesses the state of the profession today, is the most valuable book to appear in decades. The American Association for State and Local History is to be congratulated for recognizing the need to publish a work of this kind and for securing a knowledgeable author with experience and perspective. Edward Alexander, George Brown Goode, Benjamin Gilman, John Cotton Dana and Lawrence Vail Coleman before him, not only reviews what museums have been, but also describes what they and the profession are today.

The book consists of 13 chapters, 30 pages of superb notes and a multi-page categorized bibliography. Alexander first considers definitions of the museum and then provides brief histories of the various kinds of museums (art, natural history, science and technology, and related institutions, such as botanical gardens and zoos. He helps readers understand the diverse areas in which every museum must operate: collections, conservation, research, exhibition, interpretation, and as an instrument for social commentary and change. His last chapter, "The Museum Profession," could have been published as a separate essay. It is concise, well-written statement of the how and what of our collective experience.

Miraculously, Alexander seems to have reviewed all of the professional literature that has been produced in this country and most of the relevant materials from abroad. He points out