103[Z].—ALLEN KENT, *Textbook on Mechanized Information Retrieval*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1962, xii + 268 p., 23 cm. Price $9.50.

The purpose of this book is to offer a systematic introduction to the basic principles and techniques of machine literature searching. In the words of the publishers, it is designed both for classroom use and for those who wish to master the subject through self-study.

After a brief introduction in Chapter 1, the author jumps very quickly into a discussion of the physical tools or equipment used in information retrieval. Succeeding chapters cover, in turn: (a) principles of analysis for machine literature searching; (b) principles of searching; (c) manipulation of searching devices; (d) words, language, and meaning in retrieval systems; (e) codes and notations; and (f) systems design criteria.

It is always difficult in writing a text on a subject as broad as this to decide what is significant and should be included or, if space limitations prevail, what should be omitted and referenced for outside reading. Another difficult problem, which the author acknowledges, is where to start when introducing the technical aspects of the field. The author has chosen to start with a discussion of the hardware, or physical tools available for mechanizing information retrieval. Moreover, he describes the hardware in terms of its application to information retrieval functions, which are not discussed until later sections. It would seem more desirable to start with the discussion of system design criteria, rather than making it the last chapter in the text, in order to establish the proper framework for the remainder of the text. The analysis of data for machine literature searching should be discussed initially in terms of its fundamental elements. Once the basic principles of information storage and retrieval systems have been established, then the effects of equipment selection and the design changes which may have to be made to exploit the characteristics can be more meaningfully discussed. The discussion of equipment could best be presented at the end of the text with more emphasis on the general characteristics of classes of equipment, and more emphasis on the role of computers as opposed to punched cards and key-sort cards.

This book, in the hands of a competent instructor and supplemented by appropriate references from current literature to provide deeper coverage of the basic elements involved in the mechanization of an information retrieval system, would be adequate for a first course in information retrieval for library scientists. The author has provided in the appendix a good collection of supplemental material for classroom use. The reader interested in the role of computers in the mechanization of information retrieval systems is apt to be disappointed in this text if he is reading it for self-study.

C. E. WALSTON

International Business Machines Corporation
Bethesda, Maryland