

A FIELD MANUAL FOR THE AMATEUR GEOLOGIST

By Alan M. Cvancara, 256 pp., illus., publ. by Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1985. US\$12.95*

The purpose of this book is to serve as a companion and guide for rock and fossil collectors, naturalists, and travelers. Cvancara describes how landforms are affected by streams, glaciers, shorelines, wind, groundwater, landslides, and volcanism. A section on rock deformation is included as well. After nine chapters on various landforms, Cvancara devotes another entire chapter to keys for identifying them. One section, "Contemplating the Past," comprised of three chapters, proves to be philosophical but also valuable.

After 20 years of teaching geology at the University of North Dakota, Cvancara has condensed and incorporated his lecture notes into this handy paperback. It is valuable as a textbook, especially for first-year geology lectures and labs. A fine point of the book is that the important geologic terms are in boldface type. Cvancara writes simply, teaching and informing as he goes. Most importantly, he encourages his readers to think.

Cvancara's organization rates a high score. However, his list of earth-science museums at the back of the book is incomplete.

The book's print is easy to read for the traveler. The quality of its illustrations is fair overall, although photographs of many minerals get lost in the poor black-and-white reproduction. However, the mineral identification table makes up for what is lost in the photographs. The book does feature a reading list at the end of each chapter, but it does not have a glossary.

Overall, the format is one of a condensed geology lecture/lab without the academic trappings but with some pleasurable, useful "how-to" information for people on the run. Cvancara tells you "How to attack a geological problem; How to read geological maps; How to use a Brunton compass; How to make a mineral, rock, or fossil collection; How to

BOOK REVIEWS

Jeffrey M. Burbank, Editor

field collect; How to sleuth stones in architecture or anywhere." The most pleasurable chapters for this reviewer were: How to Read Rock Weathering from Tombstones, How to Prospect for Gold, and Parks for Geological Observation. The author seems to have a little of something for everyone.

Since "how-to" books are very popular, this one should have a wide spectrum of readers. With a \$12.95 price tag, the book is very reasonable for what it has to offer.

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THE SECOND RING: A JEWELER'S GUIDE TO COMPUTERS

By S. M. Hickel, 285 pp., illus., publ. by Pimiteoui Publications, Rodney, MI, 1985. US\$19.95*

At last there is a computer book written for jewelers by a jeweler who knows quite a bit about the subject. Hickel has set out to give jewelers a comprehensive and concise introduction to the world of computers, and to describe present and potential applications of computer technology in the jewelry store.

The book is divided into four parts: (1) What Can the Computer Do for You; (2) The "IJP," or Ideal Jewelry Program; (3) Computers—Languages, History, and Trends; and (4) The Computer's Future.

Part 1 is an excellent introduction to computers, with a wealth of sound information—both for those who are about to take the plunge and buy one and for those who are thinking about hiring a consultant. Hickel

provides a good checklist of things to consider before making a decision.

He also tries valiantly to address the problem of the insider "lingo" that confronts the novice. Unfortunately, he does so by prefacing the pertinent chapters with a glossary in an effort to define terms before the reader wades into the text. I agree with his motives, but question his method: Few readers will take the trouble to master such terms until they encounter them in context.

Hickel certainly covers all the bases—and then some—in his discussion of the Ideal Jewelry Program (part 2). Much of what he includes on his "wish list" is already available as off-the-shelf software, but he has a lot of clever ideas about how it can best be used in the jewelry store, large or small. If you the jeweler have ever wondered how you might use a computer in your business, this part of the book alone is worth the purchase price. It includes a good discussion of how the computer can deal with the typical problems encountered in jewelry retailing, as well as in other areas of the business: job flow in the repair department, appraisals, inventory control, accounts receivable and payable, payroll, general ledger, customer mailing lists, and more.

I was somewhat disappointed with the organization of the book, which would have benefited from a good edit. Moving part 3 to follow part 1, for example, would have been a major improvement, since part 3 deals with important background material on computer history, languages, and trends. Part 4, "The Computer's Future," is a scant 30 pages on computer-aided learning and artificial intelligence that contributes very little to the book overall.

The book is illustrated with a number of amateurish line drawings that are of little value. The typewriter-quality print is readable, although typesetting would have

*This book is available for purchase at the GIA Bookstore, 1660 Stewart Street, Santa Monica, CA 90404.

been preferable (the author points out that the book was written on a word processor and printed on a laser printer). There is a fairly good index and glossary.

In all, I found this an informative and useful book. Although not a great permanent reference, it certainly is worthwhile for jewelers who are waking up to the fact that they will soon be at a serious disadvantage if they do not computerize their business. With *The Second Ring*, you'll have a sense of where to start when you embark on the adventure of buying a computer, and you'll know a lot of the questions to ask. Even if you are fairly computer literate, this book is worth your time. The \$19.95 price tag seems a little steep, but it is inevitable for a limited-distribution book.

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DES PIERRES PRECIEUSES AUX PIERRES FINES

By Claire and Alain da Cunha, 95 pp., illus., publ. by Librairie Plon, Paris, France, 1984. US\$24.95*

This book is aimed at the amateur who wishes to collect gems for a hobby or as an investment. Unfortunately, the book opens with a discussion of gem classification that is no longer used by gemologists and yet is emphasized by the very title of the book. Although the authors point out that the distinction between precious, "fine" (previously known

as "semiprecious"), and ornamental stones is arbitrary and unclear, they also state that only diamond, ruby, blue sapphire, and emerald belong to the category of precious stones, or gemstones. The opening chapter briefly describes each of these four gems, including their durability, color, clarity, rarity, sources, and prices, and closes by citing a number of common misconceptions about gemstones.

Chapter 2 recommends various focal points for the beginning collector, such as investment value, mineral types, stone size, color, locality, and cut. The next chapter deals with storing, cataloguing, maintaining, and handling a stone collection. There is also a discussion of irradiated and heat-treated gemstones. The microscopic examination of gemstones is the subject of chapter 4. Chapter 5 ventures into the world of "the professionals," with descriptions of various techniques of gem identification and characterization. The final chapter covers the identification of common imitations such as glass and assembled stones, dyed and reconstituted materials, plastics, and synthetic gem materials. A table of 94 stones and their basic properties completes the book.

Obviously, one cannot condense all gemological knowledge into 95 pages, but the da Cunhas have done a remarkable job of surveying the topic in a way that is at once fascinating and technically involving. The reader is led to believe that he is as capable of gaining and utilizing these skills as anyone—which, with

proper gemological education, is true. As an introduction to gemology, what could be more appealing?

The danger of this book lies in its scattered bits of misinformation. For example, the section on diamond color description tells us: "All the nuances of white are ranked on a scale from D to M, recognized internationally (the last letters vary from one country to another). The first three letters, A, B, C, have not been used and are reserved for diamonds even whiter than those of letter D (but which remain to be discovered)." Students and graduates of GIA will recognize the grading system alluded to in the first sentence. But given that the D grade refers to a complete lack of color (not whiteness) in a diamond, it is impossible to imagine any discovery that might exceed this. A, B, and C were in fact not used in order to avoid confusion with the abundance of grading systems that had previously made use of these letters.

Major errors aside, this book's primary role is merely as an introduction, not as a textbook. The photographs (all but two are by the authors) are plentiful, varied, colorful, and frequently more informative than the text. For the serious gemology student, this book is too basic; while for the amateur, who is less able to spot errors, its usefulness is hampered by its pitfalls. The book, written entirely in French, is not currently available in English.

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