
Book Reviews

ROWLEY, Jennifer and FARROW, John
**Organizing knowledge; an introduction to
managing access to information.** 3rd edition
Aldershot; Gower 2000 404 pages 23cm ISBN
0 566 08047 8 Price £25.00

An expanded and reorganized version of the second edition, this title provides a comprehensive introduction to the area of knowledge organization and management, covering a large number of different aspects of the creation and retrieval of documents and their surrogates, in a variety of contexts.

Intended primarily as a textbook for first professional studies it succeeds admirably in this respect, providing a very broad sweep of subject content within one volume.

Having said that, it is distinctive in the way in which it presents the field as a unified one, regarding the description of documents and the techniques of retrieval as reciprocal operations. The theory and practice of these are treated in considerable depth, and in addition the principles underlying various different operating environments are discussed; user requirements and OPAC design, CD-ROM technology, and the mechanics of search engines are all considered, as well as issues involved in the physical arrangement of materials in libraries, and the large international standards for information management and exchange such as AACR2, MARC format, and the general schemes of bibliographic classification.

Rowley and Farrow write in a clear, concise style, eminently suited to the purpose. Any student of LIS should find the book helpful in their understanding of the subject and it will certainly serve the student as a useful reference source for the basics of several different operational areas. In this respect it is also to be recommended to the practising non-specialist as a readable introduction to recent technical

developments in information retrieval. The text is well supported by graphics, and ample illustrations and examples are provided in every section.

The book is not without shortcomings. I found the opening chapter less cogently expressed than the rest of the work, and it might have been omitted without great loss. Lengthy lists of references and suggestions for further reading are appended to every chapter (again extremely useful for the student) but I had great difficulty in finding any references more recent than 1997. This must be a deficiency particularly in the chapters on systems contexts and Internet applications. It is also tedious trying to find bibliographic details, and the provision of an integrated bibliography, or a name index, or the inclusion of proper names in the main index would have assisted this.

[I might also take issue with the statement that BC2 does not allocate enough notational space to science and technology (p.236), since 10 of its 26 main classes are devoted to this area – a much greater notational provision than in any other of the general schemes.]

But these criticisms do not detract from the basic soundness of this title as an all-round introduction to the field. At £25.00 it represents extremely good value for money, and will certainly be on my reading list for next year's information retrieval course.

VANDA BROUGHTON

Lecturer in Library and Information Studies
University College London
E-mail: v.broughton@ucl.ac.uk

BROPHY, Peter *The library in the twenty-first century: new services for the information age*. London: Library Association Publishing. 2000. 240 pages, 24cm. Hardback. ISBN 1 85604 375 4. Price £39.95

The motivation for writing this volume, claims the author, arises from his long experience of working within the library sector coupled with a realisation that there is a real danger to libraries from the wave of the information age - a fear, even, that libraries will be left behind. The *Library in the Twenty-First Century* is, therefore, a book chiefly about technological change, how such change both affects and effects traditional library services. It is a work which leafs through a broad range of topics in its aim to undertake two tasks: to examine just what *is* a library; and to address the issues surrounding the building of a model library in the digital world.

The work comprises eleven chapters, the first six of which seek to understand what is a library now, and the last seven of which, arguably the core of the book, discuss the primary functions of the twenty-first century library and the contexts in which it is expected to operate. Overall, the book is welcome as an attempt to draw together, however briefly, information and discussion about developments over the last couple of years in electronic libraries, especially within UK higher education.

The opening to the book, however, is a rather gloomy one. The future of libraries despite their apparent popularity, is at risk. From open archives to mobile phones, collectively these threats undermine the traditions of the library. And, if that was not enough, librarians tend to bringing doom upon themselves, whether because they know little about technology or simply cost too much. This, though, view does not underpin the remainder of the work. Although cast as a deliberate polemic to jolt the reader out of any misplaced complacency, the rest of the volume is by no means a polemic and, indeed, Brophy seems to lose all but remnants of his predictions of doom. As early as the end of the following chapter, contrary to his own apparent position, he reflects that, "At this

stage of the information revolution, libraries across most sectors appear to be in remarkably good heart" (p.36).

So what is a library? Brophy examines this question by compiling the published views of the sector and its professions (with a brief chapter on the 'cross-sector' view), together with various definitions of digital and hybrid libraries (mainly drawing on JISC-funded effort). The key themes are familiar ones: resource discovery, location, and delivery with a clear focus on user needs. And then, in chapter 6, what is a *good* library? This chapter is something of a disappointment. It does not provide much of an answer to the wake-up call in chapter one but concentrates on the measurement of performance and quality (comparing the significant performance indicators of a library with those of an automobile). The conclusion, alas, is that the one thing which libraries are not particularly good at is providing evidence of positive outcomes.

The library of the twenty-first century is all about giving users what they want. The core mission of a library may be described as, "To enable users to gain access to and use the information that they need" (p.89). Thus, Brophy is keen to emphasise libraries as intermediaries or brokers between the information universe on the one hand and the user universe on the other. Position yourself within national and global information strategies and make sure you know your users personally. Chapter 8 is all about technologies which enable libraries and their systems to broker or mediate such information. Very brief sections are provided on a range of current technical protocols and standards (PURLs, XML, Dublin Core - though his definition of qualified Dublin Core is inaccurate). A drifting from the universal to the particular is common throughout the book. Chapter 9 begins with an overview of top-level, national information strategies such as the National Grid for Learning before climbing down to examples of particular services available via BIDS. Chapter 10 (user universe) includes authentication, the Data Protection Act and constructivist

approaches to learning. The final chapter, a short excursion into the near future, ends the work with the optimistic prediction that libraries are well-placed as enablers of learning and concludes that the most valued role of the library will as a 'community information intermediary'.

The *Library in the Twenty-First Century* is wide-ranging, though at times shallow, in its coverage of what should matter for libraries today. Each chapter follows a similar structure of brief sections, bulleted lists, a scattering of quotations and pointers to further reading. However, the continued emphasis on the library as intermediary forsakes the active role of libraries in creating or re-purposing content. There is little mention of digitization strategies (or their enabling technologies) nor much on the role of librarians as leaders in the development of standards and protocols. What it does discuss, however, is current (albeit with a heavy UK higher education focus) and might be recommended for the practitioner or student requiring a snapshot of the issues. The bibliography is clear and the glossary detailed (generously including terms and names not actually mentioned in the text). Despite the tone of the first chapter it won't give you nightmares.

MICHAEL FRASER

Head of Humbul Humanities Hub
University of Oxford

OWEN, Tim *Success at the enquiry desk*. 3rd edition. London: Library Association Publishing. 2000. 87 pages, paperback. ISBN 1 85604 404 1. Price £13.50.

The third edition of this text which is part of the *Successful LIS Professional Series* is undoubtedly a useful resource to those working within library and information services. The author has had extensive experience of enquiry work and this certainly shines through in the ideas and scenarios presented here. The fact that this is indeed the third edition published within a short space of time certainly indicates its popularity and relevance, as well as the ever changing nature of the tools available to the information professional staffing the enquiry point. It is primarily aimed at the newly qualified information professional, although it would also be a welcome refresher for those who have worked in the profession for a while. Likewise, the reviewer can imagine that this would be a valuable text for LIS students.

It is a slim book and extremely easy to read. It is the type of book you can pick up and put down at leisure. The text is divided into several short chapters, each covering a different aspect of the enquiry process. The author has helpfully included introductory and concluding points which make handy reference tools. The reader is initially presented with an example of an excellent enquiry form and is encouraged to take the basic layout of this form to be adapted for use in their own enquiry service. The author then cleverly uses the layout of the form as the framework for the chapters. This follows a logical sequence, beginning with the start of the enquiry process ie finding out what the enquirer actually wants. Each chapter then covers subsequent steps – the amount of information to provide, which sources to choose from etc. The author concludes by looking at how to add value to the results with a range of presentational suggestions.

Owen makes some interesting points throughout the text and often uses amusing scenarios to illustrate and reinforce those points. Personally, a particularly useful aspect of the book is the list of key references that, Owen recommends,

should be held behind every enquiry desk. To a health librarian like myself, it was handy to be pointed to more general reference tools. To summarise, this book is a "must read" for anyone who staffs an enquiry point or who is preparing/planning to do so. I thoroughly recommend that you take an hour or so to read this book. It will be time very well spent.

SIAN GRIFFITHS

Assistant Librarian
North Glamorgan NHS Trust
Prince Charles Hospital
Merthyr Tydfil

E-mail: sian.griffiths@nrglam-tr.wales.nhs.uk

BAHR, Alice Harrison.[Editor] Future Teaching Roles for Academic Librarians.

New York: Haworth Press. 2000. [Co-published simultaneously as *College and Undergraduate Libraries*, Volume 6, Number 2, 2000] 99 pages, paperback. ISBN 0 78900 974 9 Price £17.00.

The question of whether libraries and librarians are central to the educational missions of the institutions they serve, or whether they merely perform a supporting role, is not by any means, a novel one. How librarians are viewed by academic and administrative staff in their respective institutions is considered fundamental to the overall perception of the usefulness of their enterprise, and this has the power to affect their own sense of self-esteem, as well as more pragmatic considerations, such as the amount of funding allocated to their libraries, and the professional status of the library staff. As a result, there have been frequent studies in the LIS literature which examine the role and position of academic library staff: authors such as Cannon (1994) and Hardesty (1995) have surveyed faculty staff with regard to their attitudes towards librarians, bibliographic instruction, and other variables, and concluded that it is rare for librarians to be seen as equal partners in the educational process. In a similar vein, the concept of 'information literacy' and the importance of information competence and

self-sufficiency within the teaching and learning process has begun to dominate discussions of academic librarianship, ostensibly as an offshoot of the discourse concerning the 'information society' and the technological revolution. In many ways this has opened a door to a revitalised debate about librarians' involvement in student learning, although some authors (McCrank, 1991; Foster, 1993) have accused the library contingent of seizing upon the 'information literacy' movement as a means of self-promotion, and to advance their own claims within institutions that have hitherto regarded them as mere support staff.

The question whose role it is to enable students (and other user groups) to learn to be information savvy, is now officially a hot topic, and Alice Bahr has assembled an impressive body of contributors for this short book (99 pages). Some of the names, such as Howard L. Simmons and Barbara MacAdam will be very familiar to readers, but all seven writers have impeccable credentials, and authority on the subject of academic librarianship. The book is aimed at those currently working or researching in this area, particularly those who find themselves buffeted by recent changes in library operations, and who are anxious to assure themselves of a future position in an increasingly technological environment.

The central theme of the book, librarians as teachers, is framed by the changing paradigm within higher education, which is discussed by most of the authors in their introductions. This is characterised by a shift from the 'transmission', or passive model of teaching, which aims to impart information from teacher to student, to the active, or 'research' model, which acknowledges students as active contributors to their own learning process, and places the teacher in the role of guide, as the student is empowered to build his/her own learning experience. The role of the academic librarian in this new learning paradigm is the subject of these papers, and each author presents his or her own viewpoint on how they believe this should be accomplished.

Allan suggests that librarians should move away from teaching the 'process' or techniques of finding and retrieving information (as in traditional bibliographic instruction), to teaching them the 'artistry' of judging which resources are more appropriate in different contexts. Wilkinson suggests that librarians have a dual role in the new 'research' model – firstly, helping faculty understand the teaching potential of the library, and secondly, helping students to "frame questions rather than just find information" (p.37). Simmons' brief contribution, in narrative form, explains how his early experiences of libraries and learning resulted in the views he holds today. Both Bell, and Donnelly propose new, expansive roles for libraries within the transformed higher education 'culture' – Donnelly speaks of highly integrated 'learning libraries', and suggests how they might be achieved, citing examples of initiatives in the US. Bell introduces the concept of the 'seamless learning culture', which aims to support learning, not just on campus, but "when the students are ready to learn, and where the learning takes place", wherever that may be, also citing examples from the US.

By far the most interesting contribution comes from MacAdam at the end. In a thought-provoking paper, she asks us to turn the currently accepted picture of the undergraduate student on its head, and relinquish some long-held negative assumptions about student motivation and ability. She suggests that the pressures governing the typical student life nowadays force them to adopt a range of strategies to deal with all of their responsibilities; and while perhaps not acceptable to librarians as information-seeking strategies, they are, in fact, more logical and realistic for the students' own purposes. She suggests that a whole new set of assumptions be adopted that acknowledge the environment in which students operate, their relative intellectual sophistication, social nature and innovativeness in finding ways to cope with the demands placed upon them. This is an important paper.

Although there is some repetition in this collection of papers, for example, where each author discusses the background to their discussion, on the whole this is a lively, in some cases highly personal, panoply of thoughts. References at the end of each paper provide useful pointers for the interested reader. As it is a short book, it can almost be read in one sitting. For researchers in the area of academic librarianship and information literacy, it is a must.

CLAIRE McGUINNESS

PhD Student/Senior Tutor

Dept. Of Library & Information Studies

University College Dublin, Belfield.

e-mail: claire.mcguinness@ucd.ie

References

- Cannon, A (1994) Faculty survey on library research instruction *Reference Quarterly* 33 (4) pp.524-541.
- Hardesty, L (1995) Faculty culture and bibliographic instruction: an explanatory analysis *Library Trends* 44 (2) pp.339-367.
- McCrank, L (1991) Information literacy: a bogus bandwagon? *Library Journal* 116 (8) pp.38-42.
- Foster, S (1993) Information literacy: some misgivings *American libraries* 24 (4) pp.344-346.