

# Reviews

## Council of Academic and Professional Publishers

University libraries. A report on book and journal spending 1978/79 to 1992/93. London: Council of Academic and Professional Publishers, 1994. (ISSN 0965 6804).

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The 1992/93 edition of this annual publication marks the end of an era. The year on which it is reporting was the last in which SCONUL and COPOL reported independently of each other. Presumably in future years, CAPP will merge the figures into a single list. For this year, however, the traditional format is retained, with book and periodical expenditure (the latter adjusted by RPI and the Blackwell Index) presented separately for the old and the new universities. There is a brief introduction by Sir Roger Elliott, both as a Past-President of the Publishers' Association and as a member of the Follett group and by David Baker of the University of East Anglia. Both observers, as well as the anonymous authors of the analysis of the statistics, inevitably focus on the continuing decline in the real value of library budgets and the consequent decreases in acquisitions. Elliott and Baker, however, also note the rapidly growing role of various aspects of IT in providing information access in universities, and the potential of the electronic journal. Here there is a slight but significant difference of emphasis. Elliott, the publisher, expresses concern (which librarians should share) about copyright issues and the future economic viability of scholarly publishing, while Baker welcomes the developing ability of librarians to meet the information needs of the users through many different media and technologies.

All of this is very interesting, but is it useful? In one sense it is. All the data is indeed available elsewhere, but this presentation is more accessible precisely because it is more selective. The analysis is perhaps less interesting, for it adds nothing new: it is no surprise to find a fall of over 40 per cent in expenditure per FTE student on the last fifteen years, nor that the old universities spend almost twice as much per FTE student as do the new universities. On the other hand, Elliott and Baker both provide interesting insights into their respective viewpoints.

The researcher will find little here that cannot be found, in more detail, in other publications, and for detailed statistical study will certainly want to go back to CAPP's sources. For the book trade, however, for whom this little pamphlet is primarily intended, this is a useful explanation of why one of their most important groups of customers is no longer able to support them as they once did.

**Losee, Robert M Jr and Worley, Karen A**

Research and evaluation for information professionals. San Diego: Academic Press, 1993. \$45. (ISBN 0-12-455770-8).

MONICA, BLAKE  
Consultant, London

The authors of this book seek to introduce future and practising information professionals to investigate techniques useful for solving problems and answering those questions that occur in the management of libraries and information centres. They point out that scientific approaches to information gathering and synthesis need not be restricted to academe: such approaches are equally useful for professional and managerial purposes.

The book has a firm theoretical foundation. The first chapter provides a framework for conducting research necessary to design or evaluate an information system, which is defined broadly as a system that acquires, stores, organizes and retrieves information. With reference to Popper, Feyerabend and Kuhn, it examines how this kind of research fits into larger patterns of scientific analysis and how scientific questions are posed and methodologies developed.

Chapters 2 to 4 consider the functional characteristics of information systems, with an emphasis on variables characterizing information systems and measuring their effectiveness. In Chapter 2, the authors explore some characteristics of collected information and how it is commonly represented, stored and preserved. Chapter 3 discusses some of the considerations involved in how an information collection may be accessed and organized. Chapter 4 focuses on how computer-based systems process and communicate information, on how computer models can be studied to show how information is transferred and retrieved, and on assessing the human interface between an information collection and a user.

Subsequent chapters focus on specific methods and procedures for conducting research. Chapter 5 presents the first stages of the research process - choosing a topic and working out a hypothesis and methodology - in the light of putting together a proposal to get funding or approval for a project. Chapter 6 looks at basic techniques of research design, while Chapter 7 discusses ways of gathering data as part of the research process. Chapter 8 presents methods of interpreting research results, in particular with statistical analysis. The final chapter addresses ways of disseminating research results through oral and written presentation.

Each chapter concludes with a summary and a section of exercises. Presumably the latter is aimed at students. I cannot imagine a practising information professional obeying such commands as: "Unobtrusively observe people entering the local public library and a local chain or high volume bookstore. What differences are there between the two groups of people?"

It is as a textbook that I see the major strength of this book. The amount of material in the first four chapters is more than most practitioners would need to evaluate an information system. However, it is interesting material that provides a good introduction to many issues encountered in information science, and the authors achieve a remarkable degree of clarity in its presentation.

The book is in the mould of Busha and Harter's Research methods in librarianship<sup>(1)</sup>, with the surface emphasis on information systems rather than libraries. Both volumes stress the importance

of scientific method. Losee and Worley draw on the older book for a section on historical research. Like Busha and Harter, they present a thorough introduction to quantitative methods, although they allocate less space to statistics (under a fifth of this work is concerned with statistics, compared with nearly half of Busha and Harter's book).

I was disappointed not to find a discussion of qualitative research. This topic has been well covered by Margaret Slater in Research methods in library and information studies<sup>(2)</sup>.

Research and evaluation for information professionals will be of great value to students of information science. Although it is too expensive for most students, it deserves a place in academic libraries.

## References

1. Busha, C H and Harter, S R. Research methods in librarianship: techniques and interpretation. New York: Academic Press, 1980.
2. Slater, M (Ed). Research methods in library and information studies. London: Library Association, 1990.

## Allen, Barbara and Livesey, Brian

How to use Biological Abstracts, Chemical Abstracts and Index Chemicus, 2nd ed. Aldershot: Gower, 1994. £30.00 (ISBN: 0-566-07556-3).

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This publication is a workbook aimed primarily at researchers or students in the medical field and is intended to provide them with a step-by-step guide to searching the three abstracting services indicated in the title. It and its companion volume, which is reviewed below, are revised and amalgamated versions of three earlier guides How to use Psychological Abstracts and Biological Abstracts<sup>(1)</sup>, How to use Index Medicus and Excerpta Medica<sup>(2)</sup> and How to use Chemical Abstracts, Current Abstracts of Chemistry and Index Chemicus<sup>(3)</sup>.

It is worth noting that it is the printed indexes with which this manual is concerned. There is no attempt to deal with electronic versions of the products, except to acknowledge their existence. The workbook is divided into three parts, one corresponding to each of the sources covered, although the bulk of the work is taken up with Biological and Chemical Abstracts. A consistent, practical approach is adopted in each case. An initial background section describing the antecedents and format of each product is followed by the main section which details the various types of search which can be performed.

Having given a brief summary of the principles involved in searching a particular index, including a list of steps to be followed, these are then illustrated by examples of typical searches. There are three main search topics which are used in the examples throughout the guide and these are described in the introduction. They are medical in nature and although from my point of view I should have preferred examples from a wider range of disciplines, they are wholly appropriate to the intended audience.

The authors' intention is that the manual be used in conjunction with specified volumes of the hard-copy indexes in question. However, there are copious reproductions of pages from the relevant issues which means that the book can be used just as effectively if the volumes in question are not readily available. The whole work has two indexes of its own. One is a subject index which allows one to look up references to particular publications, indexes or search approaches. The other is an index of examples which lists the search topics covered.

The workbook is well written, clearly presented and easy to use. Its key feature is the use of so many example searches to illustrate in detail the various strategies the reader might need to adopt. When dealing with a subject of this kind there is no substitute for practical experience in actually using the indexes in question and the search examples help the enquirer to do just that.

One small quibble, however, concerns the quality of reproduction of one or two of the pages taken from the various hard copy indexes. It is particularly noticeable on those taken from the Biological Abstracts Generic and Keyword Indexes which are published in a very small font. The print varies in strength from readable to very faint though, to be fair, this does not detract from the usefulness of the pages in illustrating the format of typical entries.

A comparison with the earlier editions of this guide shows that it is in the choice of search topics and layout of the example searches that the majority of the changes have been made. The background sections, as one might expect, are much as they were, but there have been necessary alterations to the descriptions of the publications to reflect changes in them over the last seven years. The older volumes used a wide range of search examples not all of which were of an exclusively medical nature. This manual and its companion volume How to use Index Medicus, Psychological Abstracts and Excerpta Medica employ the same three search subjects for the majority of the examples they illustrate. This is a deliberate decision on the part of the authors and the consistency does help to illustrate the variety of possible approaches to any literature search.

One may be tempted to question the place of a guide to hard copy indexes in an information world in which we are turning with increasing frequency to the electronic counterparts of these sources to meet our requirements. However, not all libraries are fortunate to have access to the database versions of these publications and even those that do, may find that a comprehensive retrospective search requires use of both printed and electronic versions of a particular abstracting service.

In conclusion, this guide is an excellent introduction to the abstracting services in question for both researchers and librarians alike. It would prove a useful addition to library stock, especially since its price of £30 is likely to put it beyond the means of most students.

## References

- 1 Allan, B and Strickland-Hodge, B. How to use Psychological Abstracts and Biological Abstracts. Aldershot: Gower, 1987.
2. Strickland-Hodge, B. How to use Index Medicus and Excerpta Medica. Aldershot: Gower, 1986.
3. Livesey, B. How to use Chemical Abstracts, Current Abstracts of Chemistry and Index Chemicus. Aldershot: Gower, 1987.

**Strickland-Hodge, Barry**

How to use Index Medicus, Psychological Abstracts and Excerpta Medica. 2nd ed. Aldershot: Gower, 1994. £30.00 (ISBN: 0566-07555-5).

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This is the companion volume to How to use Biological Abstracts, Chemical Abstracts and Index Chemicus which was reviewed earlier. It is structured in the same way, with similar sections being devoted to each of the information sources concerned.

In contrast to the sister publication, more attention is paid to the electronic versions of the indexing services, particularly in the discussion of Excerpta Medica, which, as is pointed out, is less commonly encountered in its print version in libraries today. Having said this, the workbook concentrates on the use of hard copy tools, such as thesaurus, in developing possible search strategies, rather than techniques for searching the databases themselves.

The example searches illustrate the same three topics as the complementary guide and a single subject index is provided. As before, the main revisions in the new edition of this work lie in the provision of different examples and illustrations of hypothetical search interests. In particular, there has been considerable expansion and enhancement to the details given about the MESH tools.

Once again I would recommend this book as a valuable addition to a library collection, being a useful guide, not only for the medical specialists for whom it is intended but for any librarian or information worker with a limited medical background who needs to get to grips with these key resources.

**Barker, Keith and Lonsdale, Ray (eds)**

Skills for life? The meaning and value of literacy. Proceedings of the Youth Libraries Group Conference, Mason Hall, University of Birmingham, September 1992. London: Taylor Graham, 1994 (ISBN 0-947568-60-3).

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This is a report on the 1992 Youth Libraries Group's national conference Skills for Life? The meaning and value of literacy. The conference had three objectives: firstly, to define literacy and understand why it is so important; secondly, to reevaluate what is being done to promote literacy in the context of library services to children and young people, and thirdly, to be aware of other forms of literacy including aural literacy, computer literacy, the content of media education, the needs of the disabled child and the multicultural dimension. Obviously the proceedings focus mainly on the formal presentations, although brief synopses of five workshops, tackling the third objective, are also included in the publication. These are useful for highlighting different facets of literacy which can be equally valuable in a child's development.

The first paper by Kevin McGarry presents some definitions and meanings of literacy. This is a wide ranging paper, well written, and, for a conference paper, very well referenced. A key point worth noting for libraries is the concern today with 'literacy retention' - if there are no jobs, no opportunities, then we will have problems with maintaining the motivation to read. Hence the importance of schemes such as Birmingham City Libraries' Why Read? project, designed to find exciting and innovative ways of promoting reading to people who can read but choose not to do so. It is also interesting to see that although Kevin McGarry commented early on in the seminar that training in television literacy can inculcate a sense of critical values just as valid as those for forming judgements about print, in practice the delegates at Cary Bazalgette's workshop session felt that media education was an extremely important part of literacy, but that participants felt inadequate to deal with it.

A discussion of the different approaches to reading in schools is given in Angie Packwood's paper. Again this contribution is well structured and incorporates some memorable examples which remind us just how confusing it can be to learn to read. An overview of the current trends in the publishing of British children's fiction and non-fiction is given by Chester Fisher. Whilst this paper is informative, with plenty of facts and figures, only scant reference is made to the interrelationship between publishing and literacy.

Descriptions of how library authorities are promoting literacy in practice are given in three contrasting papers: John Wilkins from Camden comments on the challenges of working in an 'inner city' authority, Elspeth Mitcheson from Gwynedd discusses literacy in a rural bilingual community, and Pat Coleman describes several innovative initiatives in Birmingham City Libraries.

Although there are invariably delays in publishing proceedings I am pleased to say that this collection of papers stands well on its own merits and seems to have retained some of the freshness of the original conference. If you need a snapshot of the 'state of play' for libraries and literacy and young people then this report provides an ideal accessible starting point.

### **Prytherch, Ray**

Information management and library science: a guide to the literature. Aldershot: Gower, 1994. £35.00 (ISBN 0-566-07467-2).

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The world in which information professionals currently work has changed enormously since the first edition of this book was published in 1983 (as Sources of information in librarianship and information science). Areas of change have not necessarily been confined to technological developments such as networking and the Internet, the broader telecommunications front, imaging and records management, and multimedia services. There have also been deep-seated movements in terms of quality assurance and performance assessment, customer care and relations, convergence between previously separate services, together with the burgeoning of information consultants and brokers. These developments and others are suitably reflected in this impressive guide to the literature.

The volume is divided into two parts. Firstly, nine chapters are devoted to the different categories of literature including professional organizations, current awareness services, summaries, research

activity, reference material and index and abstracting services. These 140 pages represent a clearly written overview of current thinking and sources within the information world. The chapter on research activity draws attention to the difficulty of keeping track of small scale research projects. Much worthwhile activity takes place in different library and information sectors without finding its way into the conventional sources for research dissemination. The chapter highlights the problems of dissemination and coordination.

The second half of the book consists of an extensive annotated bibliography, together with a list of key journals - resurrected, updated and expanded from the first edition - and a useful directory of organizations. This bibliography forms the core of the volume. Its arrangement is via subject categories subdivided into smaller groups although the author and subject indexes provide a helpful key. The content represents the author's personal selection of major items in the professional literature. A random scan of the seventy-five categories indicates, in my view, a representative summary of each. The criteria for inclusion are reliability, brevity, currency and authority. The author has helpfully provided critical annotations including strengths and limitations where appropriate. The cited titles are mainly taken from the previous five years although a liberal smattering of 'classic' texts has contributed to a rich picture.

The lists of key journals are intended to provide a sound basis for information professionals to keep abreast of developments on a wide front. Again these lists represent a personal selection and are divided into core journals and more specialist/fringe areas. The details in the directory of organizations (28 pages) should be used with caution bearing in mind that this information was added in early 1993 since telephone and fax numbers alter frequently. I am nevertheless surprised at the omission of e-mail addresses.

The audience for this book - "the only standard British source" - will be information workers in industry, the professions and the academic sector. It will be welcomed by librarians and, in particular, students of the subject in all branches of librarianship.

Finally, the two most impressive elements of the volume are its comprehensive coverage and balance across sources. Its scope takes in traditional as well as peripheral areas in some detail. There is also good balance between sources from the UK, the United States and Europe, together with an appropriate mixture of electronic and printed formats. This book is highly recommended.

**Gurnsey, John**

Copyright theft. Aldershot: Aslib/Gower, 1994. £28.50 (ISBN 0-566-0763-4).

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There are a number of issues which contribute to the complex nature of the copyright debate. These include the following: the notion that theft may have taken place even though the original material remains intact; widespread practice of enjoying tapes, software, video and books with scant consideration of their origins and legality; the efficacy of legislation created for a print-based industry in dealing with an international multimedia society; the financial aspects of copyright theft; and a recognition that information is now a hugely tradeable commodity. This complexity, together with the specialist nature of the topic have put copyright, in the UK information

environment at least, mainly in the hands of a few experts such as Cornish, Oppenheim and Wall. All three have provided much needed help to the information professional in terms of publications and courses. Gurnsey's comprehensive and forward-looking book is a welcome addition to the collection.

Following the introduction, the sixteen chapters are divided into three parts: conventional printing; electronic media; and the future. The first part traces the history, nature and legal aspects of copyright theft. Thankfully the author has explicitly avoided becoming involved in the minutiae of copyright law but concentrates on abuse of the law. International issues, including piracy - defined as the large scale and commercial theft of copyright protected material - in the former eastern bloc and developing countries, are well covered. It is interesting to note that just ten countries account for around two thirds of all pirated UK material. Of all the difficulties facing publishing the currently most feared seems to be photocopying, mainly because the problem is insidious and one over which the industry has little control. The chapter on the implications for publishers addresses the issues concisely and in a stimulating way. The final chapter in the first part covers electronic publishing including downloading, networking and the Internet - "the nightmare scenario which publishers dread" (p56) - and electronic journals. I am slightly puzzled as to why this chapter was not included in Part Two under Electronic Media.

Part Two - the largest section - is subdivided into databases, audio (home taping and piracy), broadcast and video material, software and games/multimedia. The gulf between vendors and users of CD-ROM software is highlighted and the question remains whether copyright is the most appropriate mechanism by which databases can be protected. The rather depressing conclusions to the two audio-related chapters are that the market for piracy is largely based on greed and, inevitably given human nature, low cost illegal material will always be traded. Piracy of videos is followed by that of software and, in particular, the industry's attempts to come up with effective software copy protection. The final chapter on multimedia products suggests that many companies are now pulling back on product development and new launches because they are unwilling to risk investment in an area where legal issues are so uncertain.

This eases the reader smoothly into Part Three, which comprises a wide range of issues from the use of hypertext through globalization of information to the need for different legislation, given the new technologies. In view of the absence of any viable alternative the author favours adapting the legislation to a modern context rather than abolishing it. The final chapter explores the wider information world beyond copyright and areas for future debate are highlighted. These include the coexistence of print and electronic technologies, the mixing of in-house and external data sources and the role of libraries (the author is a librarian) as advisory agencies.

With this book the author has succeeded in a number of ways. Firstly, he has produced a very readable text on a topic regarded by many as almost impenetrable. Secondly, he has raised a number of questions which have arisen out of a comprehensive and balanced debate. Finally, he has put the copyright issues firmly in the context of the national, European and international arenas. The combination of references (c200) and a working bibliography (c160) provide ample opportunity for readers - the book is aimed at the information world generally but particularly at publishers - to explore their own avenues of interest. Copyright theft is the first in a series published jointly by Aslib and Gower covering current concerns of professionals across the information industries. If this title is representative of the high standard of the series, I look forward to subsequent publications.