QUALITY RESEARCH FOR THE INFORMATION PROFESSIONAL: A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK. London, LA Publishing. 1997. 286 pages, hardback. ISBN: 1 85604 178 6. Price: £35

GORMAN, G. E. and CLAYTON, P.

Whilst there is no shortage of books for researchers in library and information science on quantitative methods and statistics, the number of books describing qualitative methods is much fewer, and the number of good books on the topic fewer still. This book, however, is outstanding and should become the standard work for everyone in the field.

Qualitative research, such as that carried out using interviews, unobtrusive observation, focus groups and the like, has always been a Cinderella in LIS research. I suspect the reason lies in the inherent lack of confidence that researchers in the field have about the respectability of the subject. To emphasise the scientific nature of the research, the emphasis has been on statistical analysis, such as in Bradford-Zipf, Lotka's Law, information retrieval research and the like. Despite all these efforts, the fact remains that library and information science is a social science, as it deals with people, their information needs and how they perceive them, and therefore techniques used in sociology should be routinely used in our field.

This book, however, starts from the premise that qualitative research is a good thing; you have pretty much decided you are going to use it, but you are unsure what to do. It comprises 13 readable and well structured chapters on the nature of qualitative research, research design, case studies, fieldwork, observation, interviewing, group discussions, historical studies, recording results, analysing the data, and writing up the research before concluding with a model research report of a particular study. The book ends with an informative critical bibliography, and a good index. Each chapter is, inevitably, discursive, but long textual passages are broken up by tables and figures, and each chapter concludes with a "where to now?" section, a particularly attractive feature helping the reader to review and then go forward.

The book can be read cover to cover, though it is probably best taken in chapter-sized chunks. The wealth of further references with helpful critical commentary should be enough to get anyone enthusiastic. My only real complaint is that the authors do not go into enough detail on the use of ethnographic software packages such as NUD*IST and their strengths and weaknesses.

Although in theory the book is aimed at anyone and everyone, in practice it will be mainly used by academic researchers, such as those starting on a higher degree project. The examples in the book tend to be academic library based, but the extension of the examples to other environments should not be difficult to achieve. The price of this book puts it beyond the student pocket, and so a cheaper paperback edition would be very welcome and should sell well. Multiple copies of the book should be in the library of every library school. It should also be bought by anyone who teaches research methods, and by every supervisor of research students who are planning qualitative research in the field.

I almost never unreservedly recommend a book in a review I write. This book is an exception. Go buy it.

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EMPOWERING THE INFORMATION USER: NEW WAYS INTO USER EDUCATION. London, LA Publishing. 1998. 88 pages, paperback, 21 cms. ISBN 1 85604 252 9. Price: £12.50 (LA members £10)

KIRBY, John, LIDDIARD, Lucy and MOORE, Kay

Forming part of the series The Successful LIS Professional, edited by Sheila Pantry, this book is aimed at all professional LIS staff, particularly those who have recently qualified. The book was written in order to encourage the effective teaching of user education in a period of financial constraints and increasing student numbers. The authors are employed in University information departments but they have deliberately included examples from public libraries and have also considered the information needs of support staff in organisations.

The book is intended to be concise so that it can be used by busy LIS staff which is something that I felt it achieved without being too simplistic. Each chapter starts with a list of the knowledge that the reader should have gained by the end of that section - or learning outcomes, as they are described here. To reinforce the message, each chapter rounds off with a summary of points covered. There are self-assessment questions throughout the book which I felt were best used as a basis for information gathering, rather than tests to be followed religiously. The meaning of empowerment in the user education context is explained and examples are given of ways in which we already empower users such as clear labelling of stock.

Chapter 2 considers the users - both current and potential - and their information needs. The book then explains how to develop a programme that recognises constraints such as time and money, and which also considers the actual needs of the user rather than our perception of those needs. Chapter 4 covers content and structure of the empowerment programme, giving tips such as the use of diagrams to show the structure of the programme in clear logical steps. Delivery of the programme is also covered, suggesting ways that it can cater for different learning styles (due to education, age or culture) and desired learning outcomes. In Chapter 7 the reader is advised to allow plenty of time for preparation and to be willing to drop the programme if it fails to deliver something necessary in a new or improved way.

The final chapter looks at evaluation and monitoring of the programme in order to share skills, improve performance and to provide justification for the scheme if this is necessary. Types of evaluation, such as observation and questionnaires, should be combined in order to achieve the complete picture.

Although the book's subtitle is new ways into user education I do not feel that I have read anything particularly new rather a reiteration of LIS lectures and professional literature on the subject. However, I do feel that this is quite a comprehensive, concise and easy to read work. The book will be useful if you need to refresh your skills and will be particularly helpful as a checklist for any LIS employee devising their first user education programme.

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HOW TO MARKET YOUR LIBRARY SERVICE EFFECTIVELY. London, Aslib. Second edition 1997. 52 pages, paperback, 23 cms. ISBN 0 85142 396 5. Price: £12.50 (Aslib members £10)

COOTE, Helen and BATCHELOR, Bridget

In a "how to" book we would expect to find practical questions and we do here. Marketing has come to centre stage in recent years as information and library services have developed customer-led strategies in an increasingly competitive environment. Users have growing expectations, value-added information is ever more important, and understanding differentiated products and the targetting of segmented user groups is important for survival. Four realistic case studies - the last fifth of the book - demonstrate this well: information services in a law firm, in a health care/hospital setting and two business information services (both fee-based, one a joint venture) highlight real-life people developing competitive edge, keeping a high profile through networking with customers, putting users' information needs first, keeping up-to-date, being market-aware, delivering relevance. For all the marketing theory, this is the bottom line - planning and analysis carried out in an effective and professional way.

This is the second edition, by the two authors, of a work originally written by one (Coote) in 1993. The update has changed its focus from "librarians" to "information managers" and claims to have taken on board developments in business planning and information technology eg Internet, intranets. It appears in a well-known series of use to practitioners, students and researchers alike. Coote and Batchelor are partners in the Harwood Associates consultancy which specialises in professional services in the public sector. The first half covers marketing in general - what it is, why bother, how to do it, having plans and strategies, carrying out market research, writing promotional materials. Sensible and concise, it scoops up the obligatory acronyms like PEST and SWOT and the four Ps, and pushes them through to practical applications - what benefits customers are looking for, what services and products can be developed, what volume of delivery is feasible, commercial pricing or cost recovery, using the company intranet for positioning. These are day-to-day issues which are also marketing challenges. They are also questions that trigger in-house action research - market research, product analysis, critical success factor and cost benefit analysis, impact studies and investment appraisal.

This is a practical guide. It is not a research manual, not an introductory textbook on marketing and so praise where praise is due - for the clarity and sureness of the questions it asks and the issues it raises. Its long appendix on methods of promotion (brochures, newsletters, advertising, press releases) provides a useful summary. Its survey of marketing methods and trends will give a busy practitioner lots of ideas and confidence while the case studies remind us of how ongoing marketing always is. The keynote is probably being SMART - simple, measurable, achievable, realistic and timetabled. So far so good. It would have been better still to have had more direct development of this so that the questions got worked out answers - say, on market research, costing, value-added, networking) and not just hints from what are essentially the storylines of the case studies, and more on pricing, Internet and intranet business development for the information service, and more of an attempt to put "methods of promotion" in context. There is an awkwardness of tone, too, in a book which dismisses the definition of marketing as 90% common sense as "slick" at the beginning but uses it as a serious statement at the end (in the fourth case study). Either it is or it's not. That's the problem with marketing - too many people still think it's little more than common sense on stilts.

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GETTING RESULTS WITH TIME MANAGEMENT. London, LA Publishing. 1997. 103 pages, paperback. ISBN 1 85604 237 5. Price: £12.50 (LA members £10)

MASTERTON, Ailsa

Time management is one of those "something and nothing" subjects which, when well done, is truly magnificent and, when badly done, leads to disaster. Books about it share that same ambivalence. They keep appearing, they take time to read, they appear to provide slick answers, they assume we can reconstruct ourselves, they confirm the adage that there are only two kinds of manager, the quick and the dead. Masterton is an independent consultant and trainer, and she succeeds in convincing us that, despite all the other books on the subject, most of them in the general management domain rather than in the LIS field, time management really does matter and can be achieved. There are other works in this field and much else included in books on managing LIS services more generally but LA Publishing has really identified a gap here and filled it well.

Time management is something of everything else - management style, self-management, stress management, delegation, assertiveness, training, career planning, job satisfaction and employment contract. So it is no small achievement to bring sensible relevant material together within one cover, material which genuinely addresses the working needs and situations of LIS staff working at professional and other levels. One strength of the book is the use of credible LIS examples throughout: dealing with your job description, prioritising between tasks as a manager or an assistant, being realistic about what you can get through in a day. Another strength is a "taste it and see" approach, general advice leading to practical tasks, checklists, easy-to-apply summaries. Her list of time stealers is useful, challenging us to ask "is it my problem?". Her points about planning could be abstract but she takes them on to practical measures - identify tasks, sort out who is to do them, what resources exist, what deadlines, turn crisis management into creative tension. Ineffective meetings steal time away, don't put things off, work to your rhythms, organise your paperwork and your workspace, use your diary (appointments, tasks and don't forget). Use the 80/20 rule (80% major tasks, 20% routine). Electronic organisers are all very well. Learn to say no, reduce stress, get on with your life.

But this is not just a string of hearty cliches: the emphasis is on actually doing these, making them an everyday part of your working life. The author is realistic about how hard this is in a busy and exploitative LIS environment. Fewer people doing more work, ever higher expectations from bosses and users, more information overload, always hard to tell whether something is important or urgent, both or neither. The book aptly includes "getting results" in its title because, unless this takes place, or you think it does, there's no point in trying. It is a practical guidebook but what it says also has a firm foundation in time management research - where, for example, it has been found that top time wasters include trying too much at once, estimating time unrealistically, having a cluttered desk, procrastination and ineffective delegation. So time management is about everything weíre being told to achieve these days, as individuals, teams and organisations. So a very useful and sensible book, worth a tenner and worth making part of the inner game.

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THE SCHOLAR'S COURTESY: THE ROLE OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IN THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS. London: Taylor Graham, 1995. 124 pp. ISBN 0-94756-66-2

CRONIN, Blaise

This book describes and brings together the results of several research projects undertaken by Blaise Cronin and various co-workers and students at Indiana University, about the potential for information science work of the acknowledgements that often appear in scholarly articles. When I saw the title my first thought was that here we had an academic information science department desperately seeking a new field of research, and coming up with one of quite impressive obscurity. Having read the book, I remain agnostic.

The central thesis is that acknowledgements are at least as good an indicator of the intellectual parentage of a document as citations are. So research on the structures of scholarly communities could use acknowledgements as well as citations data. And, since citations are now regularly used in decision-making about appointments, promotions and tenure in the academic world, why not allow academics to list acknowledgements that they have received in other people's papers as evidence of their intellectual worth, too?

The Indiana research projects reported looked at acknowledgements successively in the Journal of the American Society for Information Science for 20 years, in four other information and library studies (ILS) journals for 20 yours, in four journals from other humanities and social sciences fields for 20 years, and in ten sociology journals for 10 years. Reference is also made to studies by other workers of journals in genetics and physics, to bring in a viewpoint from the sciences. This work was very laborious because no indexes of acknowledgements exist, and they had to be extracted manually from the original papers. Various classifications of types of acknowledgements have been developed within these research studies. The ranking of scholars based on the Citation Indexes; in most fields these correlated well, but in sociology they did not. Bradford-Zipf distributions of acknowledgements applied in all the fields looked at. Interestingly from a British standpoint, although the ILS journals included were predominantly American, a high proportion of the most acknowledged ILS scholars were from the UK.

Finally, Indiana workers conducted a questionnaire survey of academics from various fields, to ascertain their views about the value of acknowledgements as an information source, and their opinions about the desirability of someone creating Acknowledgements Indexes along similar lines to ISI's Citation Indexes. The questionnaire results were disappointing to Cronin and his colleagues, in that academics gave the ideas of using acknowledgements in the promotion and tenure process, and of creating an Acknowledgements Index, an emphatic thumbs-down. Their main argument seemed to be that, as the book's title suggests, acknowledgements are a courtesy, unlike citation which is an academic duty, and as such not too much should be built upon them as a foundation.

This argument could be seen as essentially emotional. From a practical point of view acknowledgements can also be seen to have limitations. The major one is their relatively small numbers. A typical scholar will receive far more citations than acknowledgements in a working lifetime, and decisions about promotion may thus be based on comparisons between very small numbers: is the scholar with three lifetime acknowledgements definitely inferior to the scholar with four? Furthermore, the few people with really large numbers of acknowledgements tend to be established, senior scholars who are the ones least likely to be appearing in front of

Promotion and Tenure Committees, since they will already be at the top of the tree! Finally, because of the varied styles in which acknowledgements are written (anthropologists are prone to very flowery ones, apparently), the creation of an Acknowledgements Index by computerised methods would be far more difficult than the creation of the ISI Citation Indexes.

The book describes the research of the author's own group thoroughly, is written in a style which is at once scholarly and readable, and is comprehensively referenced to earlier literature about acknowledgements. However, I end where I began, with substantial doubts about this subfield of information science. It has to be seen as a very minor and obscure one.

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ELECTRONIC LIBRARY AND VISUAL INFORMATION RESEARCH - ELVIRA 4: PROCEEDINGS OF THE 4TH UK/INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ELECTRONIC LIBRARY AND VISUAL INFORMATION RESEARCH...MILTON KEYNES, 6-8 MAY, 1997.

Editors: Clare Davies and Anne Ramsden. London: ASLIB, 1997.

'This is the fourth successive ELVIRA conference run by De Montfort University...the existence of the Institute itself reflects the rapid growth and change in the field of digital libraries: in 1992, De Montfort had one electronic library project...; the Institute is now probably the fastest-growing research group within the university. In parallel with this, there has been a similarly explosive growth in other digital library work across the UK and the rest of Europe, as well as the USA and several other countries'.

Thus begins the editorial introduction to the ELVIRA conference papers reviewed here. Conference proceedings have advantages and disadvantages, and this publication is no exception. On the one hand, the proceedings can provide a useful summary of current research and activity in a given field, with a bringing together of leading edge practitioners and a sharing of their latest ideas and projects. On the other hand, the resulting publication can seem unstructured and its content become rapidly out of date as ideas are overtaken by events, or projects fail or are transmuted it to other activities.

aslib are however to be congratulated for the speed with which this publication has been produced (I am reviewing the results of the conference only two months after it was held). This means that the many projects described can have latest information disseminated widely and effectively - something often overlooked by project leaders themselves - as the editors point out in their introduction. For UK readers, the strong representation of e-Lib projects is particularly welcome at a time when many of them are starting to yield useful benefits and we have a real output of systems and services.

The variety of projects and activities within the ELVIRA proceedings is also impressive, from document delivery and electronic publishing to digital library, multimedia current awareness, hyperlibrary and user studies all being represented. Technical issues are also represented, as for example the mirroring and caching of web sites. I personally was particularly interested in the user studies and the occasional difference between what we as library and information workers really wanted as opposed to what we thought was required - a salutary lesson!

While the editors are correct in their opening statement that 'we have come a long way in a short time', the conference papers also show that we still have a long way to go. Attention is drawn by Whalley and others, for example, to the fact that the economic theories of electronic publishing have barely been tested. Copyright inevitably rears its (confused?) head. Are we any further forward here in reality?

'The sign of a maturing field is perhaps the point where people step back and consider higher-level strategic and policy issues underlying the hectic pace of developments. This year's conference has a whole paper session devoted to such issues, reflecting the need for visionary management if organisations are to cope with the huge impact of these technologies on their work and social cultures'. The result is 'The Electronic Library: critical issues and responses', a brilliant paper by Brian Cook, Pro- Vice-Chancellor at Griffiths

University, Queensland. Indeed, I found Cook's paper so stimulating that I would suggest the conference papers are worth having just for this. In just 18 pages, he summaries the key issues facing digital librarians. I would argue that this paper will become one of the classics of the professional literature in years to come. I commend it to all who are interested in our electronic future.

The editors claim that ELVIRA 'continues to be a conference for everyone in the field'. There is certainly much up-to-date (at the time of writing) information for a wide range of people and I for one would recommend that the papers be widely disseminated. The editorial style is good and, while the 'seamlessness' of a collection of essays on a single theme is missing, the editors rightly point out that at the moment at least, it is not possible to channel digital library activity into rigid themes. The international flavour of the conference is also welcome, showing as it does that we really are living in a global library environment and there are many e-mail contacts that one can follow up for further information, whether in South Africa, Budapest, Australia or the UK. The publication is well produced and deserves widespread support. I recommend it to all who have an interest or an involvement in the digital library world. It will be interesting to see how the individual projects progress and how Brian Cook's projected future unravels. Will we be fit for the challenges which he lays down before us?

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THE QUEST FOR QUALITY: SIXTEEN FORMS OF HERESY IN HIGHER EDUCATION. Buckingham: The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press, 1995 paperback. ISBN 0-335-19350-1, hardback ISBN 0-335-19351-X.

GOODLAD, Sinclair

This is quite unlike many other studies of quality in higher education which have focused on how quality can be achieved, and are based on the assumption that a quality-managed approach to university development is both inevitable and desirable. Instead, this is a personal and polemical exploration of what quality means for institutions that compromise complex scholarly communities with varied and competing agendas. It provides a robust critique of the misuse of quality management techniques.

The author's aims as outlined in the Introduction are ambitious: examining quality issues with regard to the curriculum, teaching methods and research; proposing a position "concerning the nourishment of persons from which all those concerned with higher education can comment on..."; offering examples of good practice; and arguing that there is a need for "threshold procedures" of quality monitoring. It is admitted at the outset that this book could only be the beginning and not the end of the debate about what constitutes a quality university; it represents not a fixed position but a possible approach and is not a guide to actions, but "an aid to criticism".

However, to determine what constitutes quality for any organization, it is necessary first to understand what its customers and other stakeholders expect of its services and how these are perceived. Here, the author's claims for universities as "the central institutions of modern civilization" show how difficult it can be for academics - only one of the many stakeholder groups - to relate their perceptions of a quality university to those of wider society. The major problem facing universities at present is precisely that they are no longer regarded by many people as either central or essential. The "misguided notions" of how universities should fulfil their functions do at least provide a response which aims to answer this difficulty and to reclaim the ground which has been lost. In his sweeping analysis, the author fails fully to acknowledge that the difficulty for universities is that perceptions of quality are something over which they no longer have complete control. Quality is now being determined by their customers and funders. This failure weakens a generally well-argued and thoroughly research case.

What is described here as the obsession with quality (an excellent overview of national and international developments is provided) is regarded by many as just a belated attempt at quality assurance. Even if clumsily at present, funders and university managers are at least now addressing criticisms that universities have up until now been insufficiently accountable. As publicly funded institutions, universities are part of a sector which has seen the introduction of sometimes painful management interventions to provide assurances to funders and to customers that a guaranteed level of service delivery will be provided. Much of the quality debate which is ongoing in health services, social services, public libraries, etc. shares similarities with that in higher education. The central argument of this study, that the nourishment of persons has to be at the centre of the aims and purposes of universities, is common to that in all public services. However, quality management is not antithetical to the goal of supporting individuals. Effective management in public services means that people should be a prime consideration. The sixteen "heresies" identified here, which could equally be translated into terms relevant to other services, simply indicate that quality management

in universities needs to be more effective than it has been up to now.

This is a though-provoking study, but its arguments would have convinced more if the wider context for the management of public institutions had been considered. Academics can no longer lay claim to uniqueness amongst public service professionals: special pleading for universities has to be a thing of the past.

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