

## BOOK REVIEWS

**The Dissemination of Information.** J. E. ROWLEY and C. M. D. TURNER. Westview Press, Boulder (1978). 356 p., \$17.75. ISBN 0-89158-830-2

The authors' intention in this book was to integrate answers to the following questions they believe librarians are asking about libraries. What information and dissemination services should academic, public and special libraries provide? To whom? And at what cost? It is also intended as a text for students that they believe for the first time encompasses all dissemination services. Both authors teach at the Department of Librarianship at the City of Birmingham Polytechnic in Britain. Their backgrounds in physics and economics as well as the first author's training at City University in London enriches their approach to an otherwise mundane topic.

To start, it is not at all clear that librarians are asking questions about provision of good library services now to any greater extent than they ever have. Second, it may be inappropriate to ask what information services *libraries* should provide. There is changing demand for information, or more accurately, perhaps, for know-how. But the demand is not directed exclusively toward libraries. Libraries are not expected by managers, local authority staff, personnel officers, etc. to be the primary suppliers of their information needs. Third, the book does not really offer practical advice about what information services libraries should provide.

It does survey some of the newer information and dissemination services that were provided, tested or discussed up to 1976. The book begins with a chapter on the nature of information, treating it as a "raw material," as a "commodity." It presents the ideas of a small fraction of others who have written about this, mostly from Britain. It offers as "the more interesting" approach a "fundamental equation of information theory:  $\Delta I + (s) \rightarrow (s + \Delta s)$ , where  $(s)$  is the knowledge structure, which is modified by the information input  $\Delta I$  to give a totally new knowledge structure  $(s + \Delta s)$ ." Most scientists, including this reviewer, would regard this to be a meaningless, decorative use of symbols devoid of scientific value. The ideas of more penetrating thinkers (in this reviewer's judgment), however, were omitted. Nor did the authors contribute anything to the discussion. It seems not to matter, however, because of the authors' very unconvincing argument that an understanding of how different individuals have tried to define information is valuable for the mundane task of ensuring that library patrons receive the right article at the right time.

Chapter 2, "Information Use," is primarily an introduction to statistical and empirical research methods for identifying user needs. It does not go into enough technical detail to be used for reference or to compete with books on survey design or user needs as a "how-to-do-it" manual. Yet 47 pages on methodology is too much to give someone who wishes merely to know *about*, to get an impression of, the methods used as an overall perspective. Neither the central concept of confirmatory research—hypothesis testing—nor references to methods of exploratory research (e.g. by J. W. Tukey) are mentioned.

The end of this chapter summarizes some interesting findings of such user studies, mostly from Britain. They are not, however, critically evaluated and poor surveys (p. 109) are cited along with others, resulting in contradictory findings.

Chapter 3 surveys information services. It repeats the naive discussion of an "information explosion" from Chapter 1. It classifies information services into: special libraries, public libraries and academic libraries. It structures them into the functions of selection and indexing, lending, photocopying, translating. This is followed by a useful explanation of the distinction between economic and accounting costs and how they treat sunk costs. A discussion of the "economics of information" without reference to the contribution of Marschak is much like a discussion of coding without reference to Shannon, however. On page 142, a formula for assessing costs per library staff member per hour is reproduced as:

$$\left( \frac{\text{salary}}{1950} + 26\% \right) + (175\% \text{ to } 225\%)$$

resulting in an estimate of about £5 per hour worked (about \$10; compare this with about \$30 per hour for the labor of automobile mechanics or \$60-100 per hour for doctors). In the discussion of cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness of libraries another major omission occurs, this time of the work of P. Morse and those who built on it. It was interesting for this reviewer to learn that McAlpine has linked the macroeconomic models of Keynes and Hicks to political theory by way of information science, whereby information is analogous to "stock" and becomes valuable only if transferred.

Chapter 4 surveys abstracting and indexing services. It may go beyond existing surveys in bringing together in one place the results of Cranfield II, the Keen-Digger Aberystwyth index-language text, none of which appear to be conclusive. It is reassuring to read as a conclusion that "natural-language systems are fairly cheap to organize and to apply and seem to yield reasonable results."

Chapters 5 and 6 survey local and external information systems, respectively. Both are weak on the major emerging trends due to the introduction of computers and electronic communications. There is little reference to the work of the Institute for Scientific Information, automatic indexing or abstracting, or higher-level evaluations of systems for the selective dissemination of information. On the other hand, good questions are asked about UNISIST, INIS, AGRIS (there is no mention of DEVSYS).

The last chapter, "Barriers to Dissemination," is the most disappointing. Only the foreign-language barrier, copyright and microforms are discussed. Omitted are the barriers to use of computers, to utilization of data bases and of knowledge generally, etc. The kind of statement that leads this reviewer to criticize this book as missing the main point is illustrated by (p. 298): "If everything that an individual needs to read is available in his native tongue, there is no problem." There is indeed a problem whenever an individual steps into a library, becomes aware that all he needs to read is available in his native tongue, and realizes that to do it would by far exceed his expected lifetime.

Lastly, the book is carelessly typeset and proofread. There is a reference in the text to Nairn, for example, that was probably meant to be Narin; it seems to appear in the bibliography as Marin.

*Mental Health Research Institute*  
*University of Michigan*  
*Ann Arbor, MI 48104, U.S.A.*

MANFRED KOCHEN

*Information Processing & Management* Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 100-101, 1982  
Printed in Great Britain.

0306-4573/82/060100-02\$03.00/0  
Pergamon Press Ltd.

**Indexing and Abstracting: An International Bibliography.** HANS H. WELLISCH. Published in cooperation with the American Society of Indexers and The Society of Indexers (U.K.). Santa Barbara, California: Americal Bibliographical Center—Clio Press (1980). 308 pp. LC 80-11907. ISBN 0-87436-300-4.

This book is a remarkable and ambitious achievement. Promoted as "the first comprehensive bibliography on indexing and abstracting ever compiled, encompassing more than 100 years of publications on the subject of indexing," it is that and more, since most of the 2394 items are provided with abstracts. This is especially impressive in that most of the abstracts had to be written or extensively edited by Mr. Wellisch. For the most part they read well.† It is a delight to browse through them; in such pursuit one could while away innumerable Sunday afternoons. But the bibliography is of more than casual interest; it fills a gap long felt by both teachers and researchers in the areas of indexing and abstracting.

The bibliography covers the period from 1856, the year of A. Crestadoro's proposal for permuted title term indexing to 1976. In geographic scope it is international, consisting of items in 25 languages. However the proportion of non-English contributions is not high (15.5%). Given many American's lack of language skills, more foreign language contributions would have been welcome, e.g. J. M. Ducrot's *TITUS II System* (1974); I. Dahlberg's "Multilevel semantic and formal subject representation of document contents" (1974), and S. Uemura's "Studies in automatic indexing II" (1974). A method to extend the proportion of foreign items in the next edition (promised) might be to use abstracts from the journal *International Classification*.

No doubt a formidable part of the formidable task of compiling a bibliography of this nature is defining its boundaries. How the boundaries are drawn will not please everyone; yet they should be clearly indicated. In the case of this bibliography clearer indications would have been desirable, particularly where the area of indexing shades into the related areas of subject cataloging, classification and information retrieval. C. A. Cutter looms large in the history of subject cataloging, yet only that part of his Rules dealing with arrangement is cited; no mention is made of his famous principles, or his discussion of inversion. Neither is D. J. Haykin mentioned nor J. Pettee. However PRECIS, no less than the Library of Congress Subject Headings a method for indicating the subjects of books, is favored with many citations.

In regard to the line between indexing and classification Mr. Wellisch observes only that "British writers always make a clear distinction between "classification" as the term for subject indication by a systematic

†An exception, no doubt isolated, is the somewhat misleading abstract of this reviewer's Ph.D. dissertation.