

# Bookshelf

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*Volunteers are always required to review books and serials for this page. Please contact: Brian Cox, 9 Mulberry Drive, Wheatley, Oxford OX33 3UT, England. Tel: 01865 872720 E-mail: uksg.admin@dial.pipex.com*

## **Towards electronic journals: realities for scientists, librarians and publishers**

Tenopir, Carol and King, Donald W

*Washington DC, SLA Publishing, 2000. 448pp ISBN:0 87111 507 7 (paperback). \$59 (members \$49)*

This is probably the most important book to have been written concerning the use, purpose, cost and price of scientific journals. Every serials librarian and publisher should read it. There are so many myths that bedevil anything said about the scientific journal that to have a work so thoroughly founded in fact and observation is timely and essential.

Tenopir and King began their research association in 1996 with an important article in the *Library Journal* (Vol. 121, March 15, pp 32-35). They attempted to set the record straight on the myths of journal publishing by looking at the fundamental realities revealed by the available data about journal use and usefulness. Since then they have published a number of important articles in both the *Journal of Electronic Publishing* (a free online journal) and the *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* on various aspects of this problem. This present book is a compendium of all their work together. They say in the preface that 'much of the literature about electronic publishing was based on opinion and speculation, with little data to support the many conjectures

that were being made.' This is really Tenopir and King's manifesto position: they are the foremost proponents of what could be described as 'evidence-based publishing research.'

Although the title of the book suggests it will be a study of 'electronic journals', perhaps the key word is 'towards.' Tenopir and King review the data concerning the ways in which scientific journals are read and by whom, correctly believing this to be a guide to how authors and users will behave after the electronic transition. They present the most even-handed analysis of the current situation that can be found in print. For them the pragmatics are much more important than any other issue: what did actually occur in the development of the journal; how do users really use the journal and what is realistic to expect in the future?

The book is composed of five parts. Part 1 looks at the historical background of both traditional and electronic journals. Part 2 is concerned with the involvement of the scientific community in the publishing process, that is as editors, referees, authors and readers. Part 3 concentrates on the role of the library and especially the interaction between the use of information and its economic cost. Part 4 looks at the role of the publisher, examining publishing trends in terms of the number and size of scholarly journals, their cost and economic properties. A very detailed cost model for journal

publishing is described, which is used to analyse the reality behind the debate about publisher costs and profits. Part 5 looks at electronic publishing and specifically issues relating to the transformation of the paper model to an electronic universe. The book benefits from a large bibliography of cited references, covering over 60 pages and 600 or more items. It concludes with both an author and a subject index.

This book is a treasure trove of important and relevant data. Anyone interested in the scholarly communication universe will find illumination and enlightenment from the conclusions that Tenopir and King draw. Polemicists will not enjoy this book because it describes the world as it is and not as some observers would like it to be.

Perhaps the main criticism that could be levelled at the data is its concentration solely on 'US journals and scientists.' As a publisher, I find the notion of a US journal problematic. Almost all scientific journals are global in reach and I suspect that the journals, which Tenopir and King are talking about, are themselves global journals that just happen to be published in the US. The survey data on the extent to which scientists use articles, how much article readership has been vastly underestimated and the importance of those articles to the scholarly community is also based upon American survey data (although global studies, I have seen, generally tend to confirm their results). Tenopir and King recognise this failing in their current work and I understand are looking at the international dimension for a revised second edition. This is to be thoroughly applauded. It should, however, be recognised that the North American bias of this text in no way undermines the importance of the conclusions that they form. While you may expect there to be some differences between scientists in North America and elsewhere, what they share vastly outweighs their differences.

Tenopir and King conclude that the scientific journal is and will continue to be important, that it is heavily used, and that the decisions readers make about format and electronic take up are securely founded in an unconscious time cost-benefit analysis. They diagnose the original cause of the serials pricing spiral and examine how

feasible some proposed remedies might be. In all cases they are scrupulously even-handed and only reach conclusions after extensive examination of the evidence and modelling of consequences. When they do not think any conclusion should be drawn, they say so.

This is probably not the sort of book you will read in one go, or in sequence. It is factually dense and this may be a stumbling block for readers, who might want a simpler narrative strand, but each chapter repays re-reading and the cumulative effect will give any reader an understanding of the complex and interwoven patterns of scholarly communication based upon reality. This is a must-have publication.

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### **Managing acquisitions in library and information services**

Chapman, Liz

*London: Library Association Publishing, 2001. 150 pp.  
ISBN 1 8560438X. £24.95*

This book is a completely updated edition of "*Buying books for libraries*," 1989. It is aimed at people who are new to acquisitions work, students, assistants and also those who are taking a fresh look at it. Written by an eminent academic librarian, it is also most useful for other sectors, particularly library suppliers and publishers.

The book covers:-

- pre-order checking;
- publishers and publishing;
- different kinds of book and non-book material;
- suppliers;
- actual ordering process;
- out-of-the ordinary ordering;
- order arrival;
- finance and budgets.

The order process is followed through in a logical and chronological sequence, from receiving a request to tracing an audit trail. Particularly useful are screen dumps from both library management and supplier systems used as examples throughout the book. There are

many very useful lists e.g.:

- questions to ask a potential supplier;
- criteria for selecting an automated order system;
- factors to consider for electronic publications;
- report codes on suppliers' systems;
- bibliographical sources for French, German, Spanish and Italian material;

... and lots more!

The book tackles internet suppliers, consortium purchasing, EDI, e-books, credit and purchase cards and gives tips for how to keep up with the rapid developments in acquisitions work.

This is a highly practical book for dealing with

acquisitions issues on a daily basis. There are plenty of sub-headings within chapters making it very easy to locate the information you need, with or without the index.

There is a very useful glossary. The references include relevant URLs, databases (web and CD-ROM), books and journals. There is an up-to-date section of further reading.

Altogether, a most useful publication. This is not a book to be left on your bookshelf, but to be kept to hand on your desk for daily reference.

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