

Bookshelf

Brian Cox



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International Librarianship: Cooperation and Collaboration

Edited by Frances Laverne Carroll and John Frederick Harvey. Coordinated by Susan Houck.

Lanham, Maryland, USA: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2001. 367pp. ISBN 0-8108-3921-0. Clothbound, US\$65. Available in the UK from Shelwing Ltd, 4 Pleydell Gardens, Folkestone, Kent CT20 2DN

When I was at library school I remember one of the course tutors holding up a dictionary and saying "What is it?". I along with my fellow students sat in silence trying to decide what to say. It was too obvious to say that it was a dictionary so we thought on. Eventually our tutor, a little exasperated said, "Well, it is a book, a collection of words and the words are listed alphabetically, etc.". The moral of the story is that when asked to describe something one should start by stating the obvious.

International Librarianship: Cooperation and Collaboration is a collection of thirty-two essays sharing a very broad theme, namely the international transfer of information. The articles have been subdivided into five divisions, the first of which is untitled while the other four have division titles. Divisions two and three have division editors, the others do not. At the end of the book is a list of contributors giving a brief outline of their careers. There we have the bare bones; I will now attempt to flesh them out.

The first thing to say is that I found most of the essays both interesting and informative, if a little too brief to be more than an introduction to or

overview of the given subjects. This is in part due to the fact that each essay is a discrete piece of work and can be read without reference to any other essay in the collection. A significant piece of each essay is given over to introducing the topic, thus cutting down on the space available for a more in-depth treatment. On the plus side, this is a book that you dip into even if you only have ten minutes on the train in the morning. You can get through a complete essay between Lewisham and Waterloo! My biggest reservation about the book is whether it amounts to more than the sum of its parts. I have to say I don't think it does.

The dust-jacket informs the reader that, "This compilation is not a collection of papers but rather a well-edited collage of experiences in the transfer of library technical information..." and there we have the first problem: the title of the book leads one to expect a *collection of papers*, something perhaps a bit more academic than a *collage of experiences*. More seriously, I have reservations about the way the book is structured. As I mentioned earlier, the book has five divisions, only four of which are titled and only two of which have division editors. The untitled division contains ten essays and is untitled, I believe, because it contains too broad a range of topics to be neatly summed up with any division heading other than *miscellaneous*. The topics covered in this section range from Brian Cox's timely reminder of the importance of Pergamon Press in the field of scientific journal publication to Robin Doust's concise account of development of Book Aid International. I enjoyed both of these pieces but they are as similar as Robert Maxwell and Lady Ranfurly – hence no division heading.

The other division headings are, *MARCIing Time, an International Pressure* (4 articles); *Resources and Regional Responsibilities* (8 articles); *Education for the Profession* (7 articles); and *Distinguished International Achievers* (3 articles). The first of these is the most homogeneous of the divisions. The pick of the group is S. Lazinger's essay on the challenges of applying MARC to the Israeli library network. M. Kokabi's essay, *IRANMARC*, and Yang Yu's essay on MARC in China are very brief and serve only as introductions to these topics. *Resources and Regional Responsibilities* is one of the largest of the divisions and despite being blessed with its own division editor is possibly the most amorphous division. The first essay, although it mentions regional co-operation, is essentially about the Czech Parliamentary Library. In this division I particularly enjoyed J. M. Wilhite's essay *The EU in America*. Its reassuring to find that the EU's approach to information provision on the Internet has been so successful that the USA federal government is now following Europe's lead.

Education for the Profession contains some very interesting essays. M. Takayama's essay *Library Education in Japan* is fascinating for the insight it gives into the Japanese attitude towards professional qualification in librarianship. Also of interest is T. Rungkat's piece on library education in Indonesia. As well as the obvious benefits of international co-operation Rungkat identifies some causes of friction that can occur when Western international standards are applied to a non-Western environment. *Distinguished International Achievers* is the smallest division containing just three essays. The common theme here is the importance of the prominent individual to the development of an effective library service. The first essay looks at the role of Ervin Svarbo (1887-1918), a prominent Hungarian advocate of public libraries. It is in effect a potted history of public library provision in Hungary. In fact quite a few of the essays in this collection are potted histories, in spite of the editorial assertion that, 'the coverage of this book dips back into history only when necessary' (page ix). The second essay in this batch is I think one of the best in the collection. W. H. Lambie has contributed a very readable account of the work of Francis Aubie Sharr, who in 1950 rewrote Edgar Osbourne's *County Library Practice: A*

Manual for Students and in 1952 was able to put his ideas into practice when he was appointed State Librarian of Western Australia with the task of creating a state-wide library service.

To conclude, I found this book an interesting if undemanding read. The essays are fairly brief, offering more of an introduction or overview than an in-depth study, but with 32 essays in 367 pages this is hardly surprising. I think the book would have benefited from more editorial rigour, with possibly fewer essays and/or more divisions. Also the division titles could have done with being less amorphous. More than anything else this book resembles a collection of periodical articles from a general publication on international aspects of librarianship, which is not a bad thing, but in this case I was expecting a bit more.

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Managing information resources in libraries: collection management in theory and practice

Edited by Peter Clayton and G E Gorman

London: Library Association Publishing, 2001, 272 pp.
ISBN 1 85604 297 9 £37.50

This book seeks to bring the traditional library processes of selection, acquisition and collection management up to date, by stressing their continuing relevance in the ever-changing information landscape. Its format makes it ideal as a handbook for practitioners in any type of library or information unit, while its easy readability renders it accessible to the senior manager and the student alike.

There are ten chapters, each dealing with a broad process such as selection, resource-sharing or budget management. The Conspectus method of collection development receives a chapter to itself and, with some updating and amendment by the authors, is here offered as a working tool for evaluating electronic resources. Since Conspectus is generally little used outside the USA, readers in the UK and elsewhere may be puzzled by the emphasis given to this one method, but the authors do not press their point too hard and devote no more than fourteen pages

to it. On the whole, the book's coverage appears to be comprehensive and nothing that should be there seems to have been omitted. Thus the chapters on selection policies and preservation include, respectively, appropriate sections on censorship and disaster planning. Most chapters include one or more brief but apposite case studies that help to put key points into a practical context. Some of the case studies are anonymous but others are identified and some, such as OhioLINK, will be familiar to *Serials* readers. Also familiar will be this nicely understated sentiment from the chapter on budgeting: 'serials present a quite different set of problems to those of other library resources'.

Each chapter begins with a handful of bullet-pointed 'focus questions', designed to encourage the reader to think about the content. These themes re-emerge as sub-headings and are usefully summarised in a review towards the end of the chapter. Between the review and a brief but analytical 'further reading' section is another bundle of topics and questions, under the sub-header 'Where to now?' Like the focus questions at the start of each chapter I found these useful, even if some sounded eerily reminiscent of library school essay titles ('Imagine you are setting up a virtual e-library in your area of expertise. What selection criteria would be appropriate for this?').

The book closes with a 48-page literature survey on the general topic of collection management, with topical sub-headings such as access-versus-ownership and outsourcing, but there is no conclusion. Perhaps a conclusion is deemed unnecessary in such a work, which is essentially a handbook? I would have liked one, if only to read a little more about the authors' views on the demise of print. Throughout the book they affirm their belief that print and electronic information will continue to exist in tandem, complementing each other while performing different roles. To those of us who work in serials this belief might already seem antediluvian, but maybe it still holds true for the monograph. On the other hand, I emerged from this book with the impression that one or both authors might be rather less than enthusiastic about the shift towards what they call 'an all-online, electronic world'.

The authors are probably correct in their belief

that the perceived utility of electronic information has, in some quarters, made the need for a coherent collection development policy seem less pressing. They note the shift of emphasis from holdings to access but are rightly sceptical of the ability of the Internet to evaluate its own content. Here, they argue, is where librarians fit into the new information chain, and they seem keen to reassure us that our role as intermediaries still exists. This is indeed a heartening thought, although those of us who have been around long enough to remember when microfiche catalogues seemed high-tech might not be comforted by the preface, in which newly-qualified librarians are advised that the digital information world is an area in which 'they may be able to compete successfully for a job against their more experienced colleagues'. Terrifying words a decade ago, I am sure, but I would guess that the majority of us are already so entangled with the electronic era that we can shrug off such dire tidings and carry on as before.

Here, then we have a useful stand-alone handbook for any librarian involved in collection management. It could probably be put to good use in conjunction with similar works, such as Liz Chapman's *Managing acquisitions in library and information services* (to which, on a practical level, this book serves as a prequel). Those outside the profession might find that it offers an insight into why librarians choose one particular resource over another, and how they manage their budgets, although it should be noted that serials cancellation is dealt with in less than two pages.

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UMIST Library and Information Service

The New Review of Libraries and Lifelong Learning

Vol. 1, 2000, Cambridge: Taylor Graham Publishing, 172 pp, ISSN 1468-9944 £70/US\$130.

Libraries have always been interested in supporting lifelong learning. Almost any activity which uses a library could be described as learning, and as there is no age limit on library use, libraries could claim to have been involved in lifelong learning before the term came into

common use. Nowadays, lifelong learning has acquired a specific meaning, and especially for academic libraries it tends to imply providing services and support for groups which have not traditionally used such libraries, certainly not in large numbers. For public libraries, the term perhaps implies more focussed, and perhaps more demanding, users of the services. As government policy continues to encourage more and more of the population to continue with education for longer, or to return to education or training at any stage in life, this emphasis seems bound to grow stronger. For this reason, a journal devoted to libraries and lifelong learning will be welcomed in many quarters.

Despite the comments above, the editorial which opens this volume states that libraries have not positioned themselves to help with lifelong learning, and taking the more specific definition of the term I am sure many librarians would agree with this statement. The editorial goes on to say that libraries need to be transformed in order to play a full role in lifelong learning, and that the journal aims to stimulate discussion of the issues and also to provide a showcase for examples of good practice. This first issue is stronger on discussing the issues than providing the showcase, but this might be expected in view of the fact that most libraries have not yet undergone the transformation required of them.

The journal contains eight papers. Peter Brophy (the editor) and Alan MacDougall outline the major issues which libraries ought to address. Elizabeth Burge and Judith Snow deal with the role of librarians, rather than libraries, and emphasise the point that librarians need to ensure that they are part of the whole process of teaching and learning. Philippa Levy looks particularly at learner support in UK higher education, and again points to the need for librarians to understand the processes of both teaching and learning and to adapt their roles accordingly. Maurice Line deals with how libraries could change to become ideal libraries for lifelong learners, and acknowledges that many different people will be involved in effecting these changes. Margaret Kendall examines the possibilities of computer-mediated communication through public libraries to support lifelong learning, and advocates further research into this area, which could be extremely

valuable to the learners and could lead them into other uses of technology.

John Allred also concentrates on public library use with an examination of open learning and of a particular project, 'Open for Learning' in 1992-95 and the lessons learned from it. Training and motivation of library staff are again identified as key issues. Veronica Adamson describes the library services offered by the University of the Highlands and Islands, and demonstrates how technology must be used alongside traditional library services. Debbie Lock and Jenifer Nordon describe a project established at the University of Surrey to support distance learners. Amongst the conclusions, they demonstrate that whilst electronic information sources may seem the answer to many of the problems faced by distance learners, licensing and copyright issues presented a number of problems which placed limits on what could be offered. The journal concludes with an annotated bibliography, which will be valuable to anyone wishing to explore the literature further.

The cost of the journal is £70, and whilst no librarian familiar with journal purchasing will think this is expensive, some libraries may find it difficult to afford literature to support their staff at this price. It is also interesting to note that, despite the potential of electronic information mentioned in almost every paper, the journal does not appear to be available in electronic form. It would have been interesting to have more biographical information about the contributors, although this is something I often feel when reading all sorts of literature and may be a personal hobbyhorse.

This is a timely publication, which contains both information and ideas which will help librarians seeking to support lifelong learners. The papers are clear, and each is presented with a brief abstract. I recognised issues and problems which reflected my own experience, and also found ideas and suggestions which I felt could be applied in my own library, besides learning about developments in areas with which I am less familiar. As so many librarians are involved in supporting lifelong learning, others will perhaps have a similar experience, and I would certainly recommend this journal.

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PUBLICATIONS NOTED

The Advanced Internet Searcher's Handbook, by Phil Bradley, London, Library Association Publishing, 2001, 272 pp, ISBN 1-85604-380-0, paperback £29.95

Annual Review of Information Science and Technology. Edited by Martha E Williams, Volume 35, 2001, Medford, New Jersey, USA, Information Today Inc., 581 pp, ISBN 1-57387-115-X, ISSN 0066-4200, casebound US\$99.50

Digital Futures: strategies for the information age, by Marilyn Deegan and Simon Tanner, London, Library Association Publishing, 2001, 288 pp, ISBN 1-85604-411-4, casebound £39.95

Directory of Health Library and Information Services in the United Kingdom and the

Republic of Ireland 2002-3, London, Library Association Publishing, 2002, 288 pp, ISBN 1-85604-378-9, paperback £39.50

Evaluating Networked Information Services: Techniques, Policy and Issues. Edited by Charles McClure and John Carlo Bertot, Medford, New Jersey, USA, Information Today Inc., 2001, 344 pp, ISBN 1-57387-118-4, casebound US\$44.50

Information Services in an Electronic Environment. Edited by Dr G E Gorman, London, Library Association Publishing, 2001, 400 pp, ISBN 1-85604-403-3, paperback £60

The Wired World: an introduction to the theory and practice of the information society, by James Dearnley and John Feather, London, Library Association Publishing, 2001, 192 pp, ISBN 1-85604-373-8, paperback £29.95