Book reviews


Jordan seeks to acknowledge his audience through a striking review of the research linked to the environment of today’s academic library. This environment is developmental and much more service quality oriented than in the past. The contributing factors discussed are laws enacted, the findings and recommendations of governmental reports, technology, the new kind of student now walking through the doors, and the implications of how revisions in the nature of pedagogy have changed the role of the academic library in the life of its users. Librarians are reminded to make their services as relevant as possible to the needs of their communities. A profile of the needs of the communities reflects increasingly complex needs of the individual, such as training needs, new staff structures for personnel and information technology strategies. Jordan’s work offers an analytical review of the nature of academic community relationships and gives some fine solutions in how the library must work with the rest of the institution if it is to realize its potential – indeed, this is the major message of the book.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the UK academic climate through a systematic survey of governmental bodies’ published acts and educational reports. The UK’s Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (which made colleges, including sixth-form colleges, self-governing; whereby the binary line between universities and other higher education institutions was abolished), the 1988 Education Reform Act (which removed polytechnics and certain other colleges of higher education from Local Education Authority) the 1967 Parry Report (not less than 6% of a university’s budget should be spent on the library, and a high percentage of research material need be made available in all subject fields), the 1976 Atkinson Report (whose recommendations arise solely from a variety of statistical and financial evidence, not from any discussion of users’ needs), and the 1993 Follett Report – are all cited by Jordan as pieces of the puzzle which can describe today’s UK academic libraries. Technology has shifted the emphasis in academic libraries toward information and information access away from holdings. Automation has enabled institutions to cope with great increases in demand without increases in staffing, but customer service will be under pressure in coping with the changes. Jordan does make a special point of delineating the developments listed in the Follett Report as chapters two through nine expand on these developments. Recent developments for university libraries are rapid growth in student numbers (particularly postgraduate enroll-
ment), a decline in library expenditure, increased prices of books and periodicals, changes in the make-up of the student population, changes in course design, and changes in teaching and learning methods. Chapters 2-9 examine quality management, users, students, subject communities, researchers, user education, publicity and promotion in academic libraries in this light in an effort to clarify how academic libraries can respond proactively in the face of all-consuming change.

Jordan writes, “Librarians still need to be accepted and trusted by users, especially by academic staff, many of whom make greater use of colleagues and informal contacts to obtain information.” He suggests that the learning principles activated by ‘learning contracts’, where learning experiences are actual a mutual undertaking between a learner and his teacher, mentor or peers, will be of value to librarians. Such learning contracts have the propensity of producing a more rewarding relationship between staff and librarian as well as student and librarian because these principles include not only communication skills but the opportunity provided by technology to develop them. The standardization of tasks has also allowed more time to be spent on helping users, so librarians might have more time to elicit trust.

The interest and value of this book to those involved in information studies education is great. Practitioners, heads of services and senior library managers in further and higher education will also benefit from the user analysis advocated. The existing literature base on the subject of academic libraries will welcome the addition of this work – its multidimensional perspective is truly its strength. Jordan has filled a knowledge gap in the field by providing valuable insights into how the academic library might go about evolving in order to flourish – “Never take your eyes off the user!”

Susan E. Higgins
Division of Information Studies
School of Applied Science
Nanyang Technological University
Singapore


Librarians tend to regard marketing either with suspicion, seeing it as alien to their values, especially in public services, or as an activity which they may get round to when there is sufficient spare time. These are attitudes perceived by the author of this new marketing text, but this seems like an arguable, possibly dated, view. Certainly there are professionals who still object to the consumerist approach which marketing may be taken to represent, but now there are many – possibly a majority – who accept marketing as a valuable activity in library and information services. There is, however, a disparity between the views expressed, individually and corpo-
rately in planning and policy documents, and the reality of marketing activity as revealed by budget allocations and management responsibility. This may be attributed to a disappointing lack of vigour in librarians in turning ideas into actions; it may, on the other hand, be a result of a recognition in practice, despite the currents of convention in management thought, that, in cost-benefit terms, the marketing model does not fit the realities of the LIS context. The fact that, for the bulk of services in most kinds of libraries, the user does not pay directly for the service, is a fundamental problem in the adoption of marketing approaches. It is revealing, for example, that what would appear to be the major relevant work, Kotler and Andreasen’s *Strategic marketing for nonprofit organizations*, makes hardly any mention of libraries, preferring to concentrate on services where the relationship between organization and market has a closer resemblance to that in the private sector. Where there are marketing posts connected with libraries investigation tends to reveal that their time tends to be primarily spent on services which are managed by or alongside libraries, such as art galleries and theatres.

Keith Hart was a marketing manager with a library supplier and is now a consultant with clients “inside and outside the library and information world”. He does not discuss these fundamental worries about the place of marketing – but as he is aiming to provide a practical working guide to first time marketers that is hardly surprising, and he does demonstrate, using examples of the possible use of various marketing techniques in different types of libraries, the value in relation to specific kinds of projects.

All the key elements of marketing are dealt with: the marketing plan, market segmentation, public relations, advertising, direct mail, exhibitions, evaluation. The practical application of ideas in the LIS context is demonstrated through illustrative examples set in public, academic, special and voluntary sector libraries. The public library example uses a business information service, which provides a good basis for employing marketing techniques and neatly avoids the problematic issues of marketing in a public service.

Each aspect of marketing is dealt with fairly briefly, but the emphasis is on encouraging the reader to put the ideas into practise. There are exercises in each chapter based on the reader implementing the advice given and feeding the results into the task set in the following chapter. One of these rightly draws attention to the need to target people with a major influence on funding as one of the key segments – a theme which merits further development.

Some of the topics covered will have limited value for many readers. In the chapter on exhibitions the author makes the point that they are time consuming, expensive and difficult to evaluate – a fairly convincing discouragement, but he presents the possible advantages and practical issues to consider in getting the best value from the activity. This practical advice is the great value of many of these chapters. The coverage of Public Relations is particularly useful. It is full of tips for dealing with newspaper editors and writing press releases.

It is easy to get enthusiastic about marketing and to fail to take a cool look at
what it is achieving. Marketing professionals, in common with librarians, have been particularly concerned in recent years with trying to provide firm evidence that their efforts provide value for money and the theme crops up here in a chapter of sensible suggestions for evaluating the effectiveness of marketing activities.

The information is presented throughout with clarity and directness. In places there are nice touches of humour (“Why is there only one Monopolies Commission?” muses the author; “Why does PR get such a bad press?”). It is well designed to put its ideas over quickly to busy librarians in their workplaces rather than to students in a classroom setting, but it does occupy a place in the LIS marketing literature which may make it useful to students seeking to set general techniques in a recognisable and relevant setting.

Melvyn Crann
School of Information Management
Leeds Metropolitan University
United Kingdom


This book, which is intended for use by students of library and information science, computing, business and marketing, deals with the design of public access systems from the point of view of human-computer interaction. It is important to realize this limitation, as otherwise one might be led to believe that all aspects of the design of such systems were included. There is nothing about hardware, for example, whose robustness for many systems, designed to be used out of doors, is surely a vital consideration. Nor is there any mention of security or of preventing users from gaining access to parts of the system that they should not reach.

There are nine chapters, starting with the nature of interface design and finishing with evaluation. On the way we pass through the searching task, interaction styles, managing the creation of interfaces, on-line help facilities and other topics. Each chapter starts with a box outlining what that chapter covers and what the student should have achieved at the end of it. Within the chapters, there are frequent review boxes, which pose questions based on what the student has read so far. I feel that these would be more useful if the answer did not follow immediately in the same box; there is really no time to think, and no incentive to do so, when the answer is instantly visible.

The book claims (back cover) to be ‘jargon-free’, but this is a false claim as far as this reviewer is concerned. I found many parts of it almost unintelligible because of the amount of jargon, and I wonder what a student would make of it. Chapter 7, Tools to support interface analysis and design, is particularly hard going. It is certainly not a ‘teach yourself’ book, and although it would make useful background
reading for a series of lectures it would be very hard to follow on its own. One reason for this is that from start to finish the book is unremittingly dull: there is not a spark of life, or of enthusiasm for the subject, in it. It consists of solid paragraphs interspersed with large numbers of bullet-points. Some sections degenerate into little more than a series of lists. It is not written in such a way that the reader is given any incentive to read on. True, there are examples and illustrations, but they are not sufficient to enliven it, and they do not go into enough detail to be helpful. A little anecdote, some sign perhaps that the authors have actually lived and worked, would have made all the difference.

The book is very thoroughly referenced, in some respects too much so. One cannot doubt the authors’ diligence in investigating the literature of the subject, and the lists of references at the ends of chapters are very useful. But some of these references are now very old. For example (p. 68), to give information in the present tense about a particular aspect of OPACs and CD-ROMs and then quote a 1988 source seems a little odd. OPACs have developed greatly since then, as these authors well know. Again, do we really need a reference at all for the information (p. 187) that help screens can range from short prompts to 150 screens of information? In any case, as the reference is to a 1989 publication, is it still true? Does it matter? The references use the author-date system, and most of them ought to have included page-numbers, without which it would be difficult to track down the relevant passages.

It is not surprising, in view of the two authors’ area of expertise, that most of the examples are of OPACs and of other library-based systems. One rather has the impression that the other kinds of public access system, such as transport information and ATMs, have been added on somewhat peripherally in order to broaden the book’s appeal. I should have liked to see them much more integrated into the book, and I fear that the constant emphasis on library-related systems will be off-putting to any business and marketing students who come across the book. The occasional references to on-line services where librarians act as intermediaries are surely misplaced in such a book; these systems are never intended for the public. Whether it was sensible to include the Internet as a public access system is debatable. It is mentioned only briefly, and I feel that it would have been better omitted.

Some specific criticisms: p. 67 deals with truncation and string searching. String searching is not defined at all, which is unhelpful, and both string searching and truncation are described as ‘useful methods to narrow down an extensive retrieved set of records’. I should have thought that truncation was a way of expanding a set of records. I was rather confused by Figure 7.1 (p. 161), which though headed ‘Data flow diagram’ is actually a key to such a diagram, not a diagram itself. The diagram itself needs a little more explanation for those unfamiliar with such things. On p. 193 the question and answer box on minimum help seems to me to be dealing with basic instructions, rather than help as such. The index, as usual nowadays, is skimpy and was presumably compiled by computer from marked terms. It would
have taken a very dedicated human indexer to index this book properly, but it would certainly have made it easier to use.

In short, I found the book somewhat disappointing, as it does not really live up to its title; it should have had a subtitle explaining its limitations. Much is included which is not specific to public access systems but relates to system design in general, such as data modelling, interface modelling and so forth, while on the other hand the more physical aspects which I mentioned at the beginning are ignored. One can hardly blame the authors for writing about what they know, but I think that the user of the book is entitled to expect a rather more rounded treatment of the subject.

J. H. Bowman
School of Library, Archive & Information Studies
University College London
United Kingdom


The volume presents the proceedings of UKOLUG’s 20th Birthday Conference which took place last July in Manchester. It comprises the conference programme, biographical details of speakers, delegate list and the text of 18 papers presented at the conference. The volume closes with a 4-page index.

UKOLUG (the UK Online User Group) is a Special Interest Group of the Institute of Information Scientists and its 1000 members celebrated its 20th anniversary in 1998. The editors describe its activities of the last 20 years: “From the era of dumb terminals and acoustic couplers via PC terminals and reliable modems and CD-ROM databases to the current era of sophisticated software and Web-based products, UKOLUG has offered practical advice, information and seminars”. (p. viii) Apart from offering ‘practical advice, information and seminars’ UKOLUG is active in a publishing arena as well (a well edited Newsletter published six times a year and a series of very useful Quick Guides).

Anniversaries create excellent opportunities to reflect on the past. Two articles in the volume do just that: Oppenheim’s piece on the early years of UKOLUG (including a detailed chronology of events leading to the formation of the group) and Blakeman’s article on changes in IT over the last 20 years and how they affected the work of information professionals. Blakeman concluded that problems associated with IT 20 years ago remain on the top of today’s list. She added that although IT did not make our work any easier or less stressful, it allowed for an unprecedented access to information and, despite many gloomy predictions, gave a new breath of life to information professionals: “The Internet has provided us with a
golden opportunity to promote ourselves within our organisations and within online community. [...] we will not only survive the next twenty years but will also be key players”. (p. 19)

Anniversaries are also a good opportunity to look forward. Rogerson, for instance, advocates citizen (consumer) choice in access to information in different formats – an issue which many information services managers may consider a luxury to ponder upon when their choices are dictated by harsh economic reality rather than the ideals of fostering democracy and equality. Next, the reader is presented with three papers discussing the future role of information, the information industry and information and library research: Barbara Roche, Minister for Small Firms, discusses the Government vision of the ‘Information Age’ (e.g. transforming education, widening access, promoting competition, fostering quality and modernising government), White elaborates on the future of information industry and paints a picture of a successful information vendor of the new millennium and finally, Muir describes the structure of research funding in BLRIC.

The next group of papers was concerned with the range of current issues (societal, legal and technical) facing the development of information technology. Lindsay poses a question of moral and ethical responsibility of information professionals towards the public faced with new information technology. Dyson and Wait wonder about new forms of social exclusion created by the information technology. They describe physical, emotional, cultural, gender and class barriers to access to information and technology. Another article tackling the impact of information technology on society and individuals is by Buckner – she describes human factors facing organisations such as physical and cognitive ergonomics, working together using technology, and training. She is a proponent of developing human factors strategy because: “The level of attention given to Human Factors will determine the quality of the working environment, affect the efficiency of people and assist in the management of change”. (p. 89)

The legal aspects of information technology are dealt with in an article by Charlesworth. He describes the development of law concerning the Internet from its beginning and concentrates on issues which remain contentious, such as copyright. The technical issues of information technology are discussed in articles by Hadland (information security management), Powell (metadata) and Davies (automated information agents).

A very short, yet thought provoking paper was delivered by December. He called for online users and developers to be more proactive, to “winnow through many emerging technologies to find what is competent, supports our work processes, and fulfills our own vision of what we want online”. (p. 121) The quality of Web resources and the role of information professionals were also themes in a paper by Holmes. Other articles in the volume included Eskins’ Web cruise of Manchester and Hodge’s award winning paper (the UKOLUG Student Award) on using the Web technology in producing educational resources.

Overall, the reader will find the articles presented in the volume interesting but,
as with every conference, some will be of more interest than others. If you are interested in only three or four papers, you will find the price of £20 for UKOLUG members and £25 for non-members steep. It is a shame that UKOLUG, set up to promote online communication, did not decide to publish the proceedings in electronic form, and allow readers to select which papers to purchase, thus lowering the costs.

Also, readers of electronic publications tend to be more forgiving when it comes to poor technical editorship. When it comes to print, we are less generous and unfortunately, the volume was not edited very carefully. Sentences such as “She was a member of IIS Council and was Chair of the IIS Committee it had to react to outside events and to lobby Government” (p. 2) or “I have picked a number of topics for discussion and identified that can bee [sic!] seen as an indicator of growth for the Information Industry. [...] We can begin to final assessment.” (p. 29) spoil a largely positive impression of the volume.

Berenika M. Webster
Department of Information and Library Management
University of Northumbria at Newcastle
United Kingdom


This text stems from papers presented at the joint conference of the American Joint Reference and User Services Association and Association for the Library Collections and Technical Services Institute. The aim of the conference was to explore the implications of the increase in electronic resources for collection development and public services. In general a good, pragmatic, managerial, orientation to the key issues is provided. Emphasis is given to the academic library experience however the public library view is also represented.

Ross Atkinson starts with a thought-provoking chapter, ‘towards a redefinition of library service’. He notes the changing remit of the library, extending ‘service to all objects from which learning can be derived’ and ‘connecting the user more directly to the universe of publication’. The latter includes data and knowledge in addition to the traditional resource information. In addition he highlights the importance of facilitating access to these electronic resources through the provision of metadata and also through the use of technology to create new contexts for exploration.

Eugene Wiemers reminds us that the design of the virtual library should stem from the needs and expectations of the user including the requirement for ‘seem-
lessness’. To achieve the seamless information environment it is necessary to remove organisational obstacles and create an environment where the user can ‘find, manipulate, transfer and disseminate the knowledge they produce’. To achieve this ‘commitment to users’ the manager, he states, needs to make connections and bridge gaps focusing on the provision of productivity tools that relate to the generation of knowledge in an environment that is not visually fragmented by organizational and content structures.

This collaborative approach is further emphasized by John Howe, a non-librarian and also by Deanna Marcum. They emphasise the ‘partnership’ approach to the virtual library. A partnership between researchers, librarians and also the commercial sector necessitated by the complexity of the new environment. An environment complicated by divergent information needs, pedagogical objectives, roles, and a gamut of technologies.

In Part II, ‘Understanding User Needs in a Changing Environment’ Bonnie MacEwan starts the discussion in an optimistic fashion reaffirming that librarians have the necessary skills to develop the digital library. Gloriana St. Clair continues with a review of some of the methodologies that can be deployed to assess and evaluate the virtual library. She emphasises the necessity of constant assessment in an environment where users needs and expectations are changing. The latter includes the arrival of ‘generation X’ who have grown up in the era of ‘media sound bites and infotainment’ and where physical use of the centralised library may be reduced. Particular emphasis is given to the graduate (post-graduate) population i.e. the future faculty. The review of methods tends to focus on the gathering of managerial statistics including benchmarking.

Kenneth Dowlin, known for his building of the San Francisco library, provides the public librarian’s perspective. He highlights the opportunity for the library to become the communities communications and information centre; a role facilitated by the Internet. Dowlin’s article articulates the potential for the public library to provide service to the home, office and the school. However he notes that challenges exist particularly in terms of the financial literacy of the librarian and the need to find non-traditional sources of funds as well as the stress of managing an increasingly complex environment.

In Part III, ‘Understanding “Digital” Libraries: Practical Implications’ Clifford Lynch starts by exploring the meaning of the phrase “digital library”. He highlights the dislocation between the conception of the library as a storage place with an emphasis on digital collections and the focus in computer science on active systems supporting the ongoing research process. The latter has led to increased emphasis evident in the NASA/ARPA/NSF-funded digital library projects on the management of data (rather than text) in computation-intensive environments. He notes that the boundary between these two dimensions is becoming blurred and that this in turn will lead increasingly to a collaborative role between computer scientists and librarians particularly in supporting the use of a diverse range of data sets. In addition he notes that that the librarian is well placed to:
– represent the complex needs of the user;
– develop access tools that can cope with the volatile nature of the electronic medium;
– help resolve the practical problems associated with implementing the digital library.

Particular opportunities are highlighted in the areas of retaining user privacy, distance education, the development of special collections and preservation.

The next two chapters provide a good overview of the legal issues associated with the virtual library and the handling of electronic information. Kenneth Crews discusses the area of contracts and emphasize the need for libraries to establish standard policies. This is reinforced by Karren Schmidt who advocates the development of a checklist when negotiating licenses with information providers for the library that relate to the needs of the users of the collection. Trisha Davis discusses the pitfalls to avoid when renegotiating licenses including areas such as defining the legal entity, archival rights, perpetual rights, networking, the user, the site, access and use and also obligations.

The final section Part IV ‘Understanding Change in Libraries: Implementation Considerations’ Karen Nagy considers the management of change and draws on her experience in the academic research library at Stanford University.

The book therefore provides a good overview of the management issues associated with the digital library environment. There are of course many aspects of the digital library environment that are not covered such as the technological and usability challenges associated with the development of tools to help access and exploit digital information. In addition it should be remembered that the book is the product of the North American experience and readers in other parts of the world will have to determine to what extent it relates to their own context.

Mark Hepworth
Department of Information Science
Loughborough University
United Kingdom


The generation, development and widespread use of various information and communications technologies (ICTs) are now widely recognised as some of the most important technical, economic, political and social phenomena of the latter half of the twentieth century. Dan Schiller’s latest work is underpinned by the belief that these events – most particularly the advent of new ICT networks of various forms – have been so profound as to create a new epoch which he describes as digital capi-
talism. Focusing primarily on the USA, his volume attempts to chart and critically evaluate the most important features of this transition. The author’s main argument is that a neo-liberal ideological perspective on how ICT regulation and services should be structured and delivered has become dominant, advocating maximum market liberalisation and minimum regulatory intervention. This thesis is by no means new amongst academics working in Europe (see for example Kevin Morgan’s (1990) analysis of UK telecommunications policy and Robin Mansell’s (1993) “idealist” model of ICT network evolution) though Schiller does provide a lot of interesting evidence and examples to sustain his argument in the US context.

The author convincingly argues that the pursuit of a neo-liberal ICT policy agenda by US regulators (ironically through unremitting political intervention) has effectively resulted in their capture by large multinational business interests from two camps: those who produce and deliver ICTs and those who use them. Particularly important in this process was the decision made to treat new computer networks and their suppliers, as separate from the existing telecommunications infrastructure. This has, *inter alia*, relieved new providers of any of the universal service obligations imposed on incumbent telecommunications operators. Schiller argues that the creation and provision of new networks (most outstandingly, applications of the Internet) for large business users has been absolutely crucial. However, it is also clear that these multinational companies were not merely passive beneficiaries of network creators’ and suppliers’ desire to generate profit. Rather, since the 1970s, it is argued that they developed a long-term strategic plan to utilise ICTs to reorganise their activities on a global level. In furtherance of this, the author contends that they have used their very considerable economic power to gain political leverage to press for the adoption of the US model on a global scale. Schiller thus castigates the efforts of multinational business “to elevate footloose profit hunger into what they seek to dignify with the term *globalisation*” (p. 208). The success of this strategy is witnessed in a spate of privatisations in such far flung parts of the world as South America, Asia and Africa, underpinned by the belief that economic development is best achieved in a system dominated by market forces. However, whilst there is evidence of considerable network modernisation in certain emerging economies (e.g. Hungary, Argentina, Iran and Vietnam), the poorest households in these locations have not benefited from this development. The position is much worse with regard to advanced services where 97% of all Internet host computers are located in developed economies. Even in the USA, Schiller argues, the pursuit of a neo-liberal policy has increased wealth disparities, reflected in the fact that ICT companies now target different income groups in different ways. Overall, the emergence of digital capitalism has strengthened “the age-old scourges of the market system: inequality and domination” (p. 209).

One of the strengths of Schiller’s volume is its focus on the Internet. There is clear illustration of how large ICT companies, such as Microsoft, have attempted to capitalise on its development. In line with the general argument of the volume, it is contended that the emergence of a neo-liberal system has retarded the process of
upgrading local networks (due to excessive costs on players acting as a discentive), thereby prejudicing individual users’ ability to gain access to advanced services. Furthermore, Schiller predicts that digital capitalism will not make the Internet the mass medium many predict. Rather, there are signs that a system of class-based, transnationally-oriented and individually-tailored marketing of products and services is emerging.

Of distinct interest to practitioners involved in information studies education is the fourth chapter of this volume which examines in considerable detail how the US education system has altered remarkably in the last 10–15 years as a consequence of increased private sector provision and the introduction and use of ICT networking. The author uses his example to further advance the thesis of the increasing pervasiveness of market forces in areas in which its presence was formerly thought to be inappropriate. Many of the results of this process have been negative. In higher education he notes “relentless vocationalism” (p. 145), casualisation of the educational work force, a lack of intellectual life in online campuses and over-emphasis on profit and loss as particular problems. At school level, the author cites the delicious example of the Exxon company’s sponsored earth science course which shows the environment’s remarkable ability to recover very quickly from an oil spill – the implications do not need to be spelled out here. However, the marketisation of education has not been solely a capitalist conspiracy, according to Schiller. Rather than challenging private sector corporate provision, universities have (enthusiastically, in the case of some entrepreneurial academics and administrators) jumped on the bandwagon. It seems clear that Schiller’s depiction of the US experience holds many lessons for higher education in the UK and the European Union.

Overall, this volume provides a useful addition to the literature on the political economy of ICTs, though I consider it to be of somewhat limited value to readers of “Education for Information”. What it fails to do, in my opinion, is undertake an analysis of the types of measures which are needed to re-establish a social agenda in ICTs. Whilst I accept that the book’s main goal has been to convince the reader of the pitfalls of rampant digital capitalism, which it successfully achieves, I would like to have seen Schiller take his analysis further. This is certainly a future project well worth undertaking. The volume is relatively jargon-free, though it does not contain any tables or illustrations, which would have been useful given its lengthy chapters. I would consider it useful reading for post-graduate level, and brighter final year undergraduate level, dissertation students.

Seamus Simpson
Department of Information and Communications
Manchester Metropolitan University
United Kingdom

The first section of this book, on Fundamentals of the World Wide Web, is pitched at an introductory level, and presents the fundamentals in a simple, easily-understood manner, accompanied by helpful illustrations. The use of emboldening, on the first occurrence, of “technical” terms, rather in the manner of *ComputerActive*, but without the boxout glossary, may be irritating for some readers, as, for its intended readership, may be the lack of conventional citations. These are, rather, indicated by italics, and refer to a list of non-standard references, which comprise Part IV, the Resource Guide.

Although there are chapters entitled *Creating Web pages*, *Designing Web sites*, and *Publishing Web sites*, this is not a manual for any of these areas, and, rather provides a short overview of each, consisting largely of definitions of terms. Whilst there is no explicit instruction as to how to perform these activities, there is a certain amount of good advice on issues of design and content.

Part II, the section devoted to Web applications in libraries, occupies a mere 13 pages. Here there are some ideas for library website content, and examples of external sites which it may be considered worth linking.

Part III, which is intended “to introduce some elements of Web technology in more detail” covers, in five pages, protocols, resource description, metadata, CGI and server-side scripting and client-side programming.

Part IV, the Resources Guide, includes references and brief descriptions of the Web resources cited in the text. The section relating to library applications, in particular, would provide the novice with a few useful bookmarks, though the usual caveat applies to Web resources – they are prone to change address, change content, or even disappear without warning.

There is an index, which could make the book useful as an extended glossary on the topic of the World Wide Web and its related technologies.

Perhaps the brevity of coverage of any individual topic might be useful in demystifying an area in which too many people are frightened to get involved – this conveys a light, unthreatening approach to issues which might appear discouragingly technical, if treated in greater depth. In a time when software has become so easy to use that, in many ways technophobia is the greatest hurdle to be faced by student and educator together, it may be that there is a niche for a work which, like this one, presents an introduction in simple, easily understandable way. For this audience, the book could perhaps provide a means of identifying an area of particular interest, some basic advice, and, in the Resources Guide, a few pointers to more in-depth material available online.

In summary, though the section on Fundamentals is an unchallenging introduction, which might be useful in classes introducing the topic to secondary school
students, library and information professionals with Web access should speedily be able to identifying, using any search engine, resources better suited to their needs.

Alan MacLennan
School of Information and Media
Robert Gordon University
United Kingdom


The authors claim that this report seeks to increase understanding of extremism and the Internet and to describe what various groups are saying. They set themselves the task of outlining the legal position of librarians and summarising the technological alternatives.

The conflict between censorship and freedom of expression continues to occupy the minds of information professionals and the dichotomy between these concepts is thrown into sharp relief by the increase in use of the Internet the interactive nature of which allows anybody to make their own contribution to discussion and debate.

The methodology is qualitative and gives a deep rich picture of the problems. In one month in 1998, 300 Internet sites were visited. This report is written in clear, concise language; it is an interesting read and despite its serious topic is, at times, amusing (I’m still wondering how the term ‘anarchy’ led to a pornographic bondage page).

The report considers extremist groups use of the technology: bulletin boards, email, discussion groups and the world wide web and legal issues and technical issues surrounding use of the Internet. Perhaps the key area of the report for professional practice is the section on Acceptable Use Polices (AUP) a selection of these are described and analysed for public, special and academic libraries. This section is essential reading for all professionals working with the Internet, it gives an excellent overview of AUPs and many URLs that can be consulted for various examples of those in use.

For those involved in educating the future generation if information professionals this report gives an excellent summary of the contextual issues and is a good starting point for developing debate within tutorials. It raises a number of questions that students will be keen to address and develop in their own research and scholarly activity. It links theory to practice and is an outstanding example of ‘real world research’. There are various areas within the discipline which this text reflects and I am sure that the report will appear on many reading lists as ‘essential reading.’

I strongly recommend this report as a key reading for all practising information
professionals and for those educating information professionals of the future. I’m sure that it will generate debate and inform discussion in the future.

Susan Hornby
Department of Information and Communications
Manchester Metropolitan University
United Kingdom