
Bryce Allen’s motivation for writing this book is both music to my ears and depressing in the accuracy of its observations.

Music to my ears because, twenty five years ago, it was the same dissatisfaction as Bryce Allen expresses, in the poor usability of information systems and services, which set me off on the path of my own career encompassing practical librarianship, research, and now, teaching.

Depressing because that initial indignation on behalf of ill-served users was twenty five years ago. And it is as true today as it was then. In fact, probably more so. Professor Wilfred Lancaster took as the theme of his Keynote Address at the Second Northumbria International Conference in September 1997 on Performance Measurement in Libraries and Information Services the observation that, as the amount of Information Technology increases, so the service to the user decreases. And why is this?

I agree completely with Bryce Allen that it is primarily because system designers still do not genuinely have the user centre stage and interacting with the design process. If this is because system designers do not really understand about users, then they should read this book. If they do not want to understand users and wish to continue using data or system driven designs, then they should be made to read this book. Bryce Allen presents an accessible and well structured account of users centred information system design in all its aspects. The author says himself:

“The approach is frankly one of advocacy, and throughout the book there is a continued argument that user-centred approaches are needed to achieve successful and usable information systems, services and institutions. The terribly simplistic conviction that provides the conceptual foundation for this book is that much information system design emphasises the data contained in the system rather than the users of the system and what they want to do, and that is why there are so many bad information systems. Throughout the book I will try to convince the reader that user-centred design is possible and that, when applied to information systems, user-centred design will produce usable, effective information systems”.

As a general statement, the book consists of a detailed discussion of users and
their information needs, tasks and resources. The author draws on material taken from work undertaken in a number of academic disciplines ranging from the social sciences to engineering. In all of these, user-centred design is an issue, and is labelled in different ways, using different language. Bryce Allen extracts the common themes from this material and uses it as a foundation for developing his own ideas.

Each chapter in the book discusses one step in the process of analysing the users of information systems and designing elements of the information infrastructure to respond directly to those users’ needs. The author is aware of the differing audiences for his book and has included summaries of the practical design implications developed in the detailed discussions. Chapter titles indicate the development of the author’s argument and include:

- an introduction to user-centred information system design
- information needs
- information needs and information design
- expressing information needs
- designing systems to meet expressed information needs
- information tasks: interacting with information systems
- design details for information systems
- information services from the user’s perspective
- user-centred design and evaluation

Discussion in the book is generally kept at a fairly general and high level. This is then most effectively translated to the detailed level by the use of scenarios, and the aforementioned practical guidelines to be found in the chapter summaries. An underlying theme running through the book is theory into action, or research into practice. It is this translation from the general to the detailed, from the theoretical to the practical, which is often so poorly tackled by authors and which Bryce Allen accomplishes with ease. His person-in-situation models on information needs in health, politics, management decision making and consumer matters are graphic two page, scenario-based, user-centred views which deliver the theory accessibly for the reader by providing a different angle on the content of the chapter. This approach provides a sound grounding for the discussion of user information tasks – the central title of the book – which users undertake as they interact with information systems. Tasks, such as scanning text or scanning electronic documents, are delineated in detail as a forerunner to establishing what resources are used and needed. This in turn informs design and sets up criteria for the later evaluation of the information system.

The book is essential reading for all library science and computer science students, researchers and academics. It would additionally give practising librarians refreshing insights into their users (and would they be prepared to refocus their library systems and procedures?) and would provide real system designers with a
much needed rule of thumb. This book is at one and the same time theoretical, practical, thorough, and innovative. I consider it to be a great success.

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This volume offers the reader 25 articles from the Conference on Information Seeking in Context (ISIC) held at the University of Tampere, Finland, in August 1996, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the education of librarians in Tampere. Underpinning all the papers is the belief that understanding human information behaviour necessarily precedes meaningful design of information systems and the use of information in our society; that people’s human information behaviour is affected by the context within which they operate. Whilst many of the papers concentrate on human information behaviour at the individual level, some acknowledge organisational or societal level variables, and these are particularly interesting. Although the authors of the papers are from academic institutions and the research community and discuss methodological issues, this volume would be of interest to practitioners as well as teachers as researchers.

The papers are organised into themes, following in the main the structure of the conference. *Basic issues of information needs, seeking and use* are discussed by Dervin and Wilson. *Theoretical and methodological issues* follows, with papers from Gluck, Talja, Tuominen and Savolainen, Leckie and Pettigrew and Allen. Issues range from a discourse analytic approach to problems of information needs and seeking (INS) studies to overviews of sense-making and semiotics. *Job-related information needs, seeking and use* offers papers by Bystrom, Loughridge, Yeatts et al., Sonnewald and Lievrouw, Algong, Malmsjo, Barry, Kirk, Kuhlthau, Limberg, Solomon, Wang and Bruce. *Everyday life information seeking* offers papers by Williamson, Todd, Julien, Davenport et al., Erdelez, Harmon and Ballesteros and Schwabe. In the conclusion, Pertti Vakkari sums up the results and discussions of the ISIC conference and shows some general trends in information needs and seeking studies which have emerged from the papers.

In *Given a Context by any Other Name: Methodological Tools for Taming the Unruly Beast*, Dervin seeks to answer the question “what is context?” by analysing the literature of the social sciences in general and of that in the communication fields in particular. One commonality in all the fields is a “move away from
research that does not account for the here and now to research that does”. Brenda Dervin’s personal attempt to identify common themes and contested themes, and then to move on to the methodological implications arising from these is illuminating and fascinating. I found her paper not just challenging, but difficult. However, it was well worth the effort I found I needed to make to understand it. I can’t help feeling grateful to someone else for attempting to put forward the arguments so that, as is her intention, I can draw my own conclusions; a task that I am nowhere near completing. In some ways, there is little comfort in her message; “In one sense, a contextual approach requires that we understand that the beast is inherently wild. In the second sense, a contextual approach requires that we be wilder, accepting the inherent absolute unattainability of our quest while pursuing the journey.” However, I find some consolation in the fact that Dervin believes that we must all learn to walk the inbetween, to find a balance within each of contested themes rather than adhere to one or the other of the extremes presented in each theme.

Wilson’s paper seeks to elaborate on his own earlier information seeking behaviour model and develop a more general model, by reference to work on information behaviour that has been undertaken in a variety of fields outside information science. This paper is cogent and clear, and as with many of them in this collection, it not only whets the appetite but points the reader usefully to the fuller reports which will no doubt satisfy it.

The main thrust of the conference is that information needs and seeking are embedded in situation and are only part of tasks/actions; meaningful only when taken holistically. In the studies represented, both quantitative and qualitative techniques have been applied, although qualitative are more popular here. Echoing Dervin’s resolve to reach for a variety of methods, some researchers use multiple technique from both methodological traditions. Papers presented to the ISIC conference draw on both theoretical and methodological ideas from other fields of research, this can only enrich and strengthen information behaviour research. Vakkari has identified management studies, communication studies, social psychology and psychology as the most common sources for ideas.

Tasks often take time to complete, and so in an attempt to become more meaningful some studies have been longitudinal and two such are by Barry and Solomon. In Information-seeking in an Advanced IT Culture: A Case Study, the total research activities of theoretical physicists were monitored during the research period 1994–1995. Theoretical physicists were selected for study because they represent the leading edge of the use of technology in academic information behaviour. By a qualitative approach which provided sufficient contextual detail, Barry claims that a certain degree of generalisability can be made to information seeking in an advanced IT culture. Solomon’s three year case study resulted in the paper Information Behaviour in Sense Making and follows work planning in a public agency involved in natural resource conservation. This studies a particular activity undertaken in a rapidly changing environment. By considering previous
research into sense making by K.E. Weick, he develops an organisational view of the role of sense making in information behaviour. Papers such as these, which are qualitative in approach, which shift the focus from simply the individual to the organisational or societal level, and articulate the conceptual relationship to earlier studies, broaden our understanding of information behaviour.

In the section on Everyday life information seeking, Ross J. Todd and Heidi E. Julien are authors of two papers that report on studies exploring information use. In Information Utilisation: a Cognitive Analysis of how Girls Utilise Drug Information, after a rigorous definition of knowledge structures, Todd outlines his study which seeks to make a contribution to understanding the cognitive processes and cognitive effects of exposure to information at an abstract level and from the perspective of the individual. Of the five types of cognitive information utilisation, the paper briefly discusses one – 'get a clearer picture'. Julien's How Career Information Helps Adolescents' Decisions-making reports on her research which attempts to explore how adolescents seek to make sense of the problems of a career related decision and the specific uses to which information is put. It found that Dervin's situations-gaps-uses metaphor provided a conceptual framework that fit the data closely.

Pertti Vakkari claims in the concluding remarks that the papers show theoretical and methodological progress in the field if INS studies, and that the system-centred approach is past, replaced by a person in situation centred metatheory. "The results of the ISIC conference are opening a promising and challenging horizon of expectation for our field of research" It is to be hoped that systems designers and service providers agree and utilise the research where appropriate.

The sheer variety of theoretical and methodological approaches described, the outcomes of longitudinal studies presented, passionate discussion, wealth of practical detail and the ideas from different disciplines explored should ensure that if purchased, this volume of papers will be referred to often, and be found to be relevant for a long time to come. Apart from the actual content of the papers, as in all such collections as this, the author's bibliographies, literature reviews and directions to full studies will also be of value.

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This book examines, from an educational perspective, some of the most important
issues related to distance and lifelong learning and it is therefore relevant to a
variety of professionals involved in the development, delivery and support of these
two non-traditional modes of learning, namely academics, and information profes­sionals operating within public and academic environments.

The book offers a wide range of approaches; this is exemplified by the structure
adopted, where each chapter deals with specific examples of projects on distance
or lifelong learning developed within different contexts, and by the background of
the contributors who have experienced distance and lifelong learning in all their
implementation and logistical aspects.

Most of the projects have adopted the case-study approach apart from two or
three chapters where an overall account is given in relation to provision of services
to distance learning or lifelong learning. Professionals who are starting similar
projects would find these chapters very insightful.

A detailed analysis of each chapter is beyond the scope of this review, which
will therefore examine some of the issues of common concern amongst the case
studies that would be useful for comparative purposes to people who are involved
in delivery and support of distance or lifelong learning, or relevant as guidelines
to those planning to embark upon either of these in the near future.

Brophy has a clear vision of the “library without walls” which aims to promote
access to all library services regardless of the user’s physical location and therefore
is concerned with both distance and lifelong modes of study. Distance learning, in
this context, promotes the view of off-campus students whose academic develop­
ment is supported by customised material which, as the book illustrates, is increas­
ingly making use of Web and network technologies.

Craven and Fisher offer a comprehensive explanation of lifelong learning which
they argue consists of: “... a deliberate progression throughout the life of an
individual, where the initial acquisition of knowledge and skills is reviewed and
upgraded continuously, to meet challenges set by an ever changing society” (p.
97). Here the emphasis is not necessarily on the adoption of non-traditional modes
of delivery, such as distance learning, but on a flexible type of educational devel­
opment that addresses the needs of the learners as these occur at different stages
of their lives and careers.

The multi-dimensional characters of distance and lifelong learning are explored
in several chapters in a variety of guises. For example, the article by Craven and
Fisher illustrates the importance of cooperation between different academic insti­
tutions which allows wider access and use of library services to lifelong learners.
The Consortium of Academic Libraries in Manchester (CALIM) and the M25
Group in London (p. 100) are quoted as examples of such an interlibrary agreement
between Universities. Blackmore, on the other hand, advocates a partnership be­tween subject specialists and educational IT staff to make full use of the Web as
an educational tool.

The case study on Deakin University, by McKnight, provides an international
dimension to the distance learning approach. This particular case is illustrative of
the Australian perspective of the delivery of distance learning on a large scale in response to environmental, demographic and policy dictates. The main issue here is the suitability of distance learning for geographical areas where the population is widely scattered and where an on-campus approach would not therefore be financially viable.

Hendry’s article on the Genesis Project in Cumbria, parallels the Australian example in that distance learning was adopted in response to similar demographic patterns. However, unlike the Australian case where the provision was driven entirely by academic aims and the universities’ obligation to provide most of the reading material to the students free of charge, the Genesis Project is community based and involves the cooperation between public and private sectors whose primary aim is to exploit the infrastructure developed by distance learning and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to offer lifelong education and retraining opportunities to the local population.

Another important issue addressed is the impact of distance and lifelong learning on the academic institutions and their support services. The argument that information seeking and retrieval play an integral part in the learning process is one of the tenets of Hall’s chapter, where the case study of the distance learning programme run by Sunderland University (UK) is examined. Sunderland has fully integrated the development of information skills within its distance learning programme and the responsibility to deliver this training, either through residential or through customised material, falls on the librarians.

Stephens’ account of the postgraduate distance learning programme, run by Sheffield University, supports the point made by Hall where the role of the librarian is defined as: “much about knowledge creation and dissemination as it is about information organisation and retrieval” (p. 123). This view is echoed by Brophy who emphasises the librarian’s future role as producer and distributor of knowledge to take account of the pervasive role played by the Web and the consequent need to acquire Web publishing skills by library staff. “The expertise of librarians in organising information is vital, and this may now extend beyond organising collections of physical objects to involvement in the full publishing chain” (p. 9).

The message here is that library staff have embarked, or will embark, upon a more active participation in the production and delivery processes, and that such a change has been driven by the emphasis placed on the role played by information literacy within the learning process, the profession’s extensive knowledge in this field and the consequent need to equip distant learners with appropriate information skills.

Stephen’s analysis raises a very important issue related to the implementation of distance learning programmes. This is the lack of flexibility shown by support services and academic staff when faced with distance learners’ non-traditional requirements. The quote below, from one of the postgraduate students taking part in the research, summarises the paradoxical situation which confronts students who fall outside of the traditional on-campus category: “How can a distance learning
student use a specialised library which is 108 miles away from her home (two hours drive each way) and only borrow books in person – yet have to complete assignments where one of the criteria for making is for evidence of further research beyond the set books” (p. 134)

As part of the eLib programme, Craven and Fisher’s UK based comparative study on lifelong learning produces a scenario for the future where the new breed of learners will initiate a change in the relationship between Universities and students, as they believe that learning processes will continue to evolve into lifelong learning and non-traditional off-campus modes. They argue that the “lifelong relationship” (p. 105) between Universities and students, will be characterised by a shift from the traditional provision of fixed-term degrees to more flexible courses offered to learners at different times of their professional and career developments. The library’s role, in this case, will be to provide services to external users and, through this, offer an alternative entry point to courses suitable for lifelong learners.

Changes required by the implementation of a more flexible approach have, however, raised important issues related to the changes in attitude and perception of support staff and students. Hall’s thorough examination of the practical impact of lifelong learning on support services gives an overview of the problems one would encounter when adopting lifelong learning practices. These problems range from issues to do with the difficulties experienced by staff in making the transition from a traditional a campus service to flexible off-campus support, to the reluctance of mature students to interact with the new technology.

A large number of the case studies offer further exploration of their projects by providing URLs to relevant Web sites. These Web addresses are extremely useful because they give the opportunity to investigate further the various Web models adopted to promote and support information access to distance users.

The problem of currency is one that will always affect printed material that makes references to Web based information as printed references of URLs cannot keep up with the constant changes that occur in the location of the Web based information. This book is no exception as two URL addresses, references 4 and 8 (p. 107), produced an error message and prevented direct access to the Web site; all the other Web addresses, however, were fully functional at the time of the review.

Overall, this book provides a useful contribution to the current debate on library provision within the academic and public environments, vis-à-vis the changes imposed by the new ICT on education and training provisions, and the changing expectations arising from an increasingly demanding ‘information society’ where flexibility of content and delivery seems to be the ultimate goal.

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This book states that it is "suitable as a textbook for a graduate level course on information retrieval, and as a reference for researchers and practitioners in industry", and as such I would highly recommend it. Its coverage is wide ranging and its exploration of the IR essentials consistent, giving emphasis to the truly fundamental limitations of the techniques (which, after all, is the subject’s attraction). Nevertheless, this does not mean that all aspects are covered and there are omissions. For instance, the author points out that the retrieval of multimedia objects is not covered. However, the attempt to update IR is noteworthy, with plenty of discussion of the issues occasioned by the development of the Internet. The intended audience stand to increase or enhance their knowledge of IR, benefiting from the practical philosophy of the text (an Instructor’s Guide is available at http://www.seas.gwu.edu/faculty/Kowalski/INSTRgd.html, which at the time of writing this review was under development). This resolutely instructional approach is followed throughout with the author’s treatment of the subject as a system in which all aspects of IR, both the human and the computational processes, are presented in an integrated fashion. Thus, under the context presented that the aim of the IR system is to minimise human effort in locating relevant information, all topics are related to this and to each other.

This then is a timely book of substance which deserves the careful reading it demands. In all it has ten chapters: Introduction to Information Processing Systems, Information Retrieval System Capabilities, Cataloguing and Indexing, Data Structures, Automatic Indexing, Document and Term Clustering, User Search Techniques, Information Visualization, Text Search Algorithms, and Information System Evaluation.

Chapters 1 to 3 define the scope of IR. System functionality and capability is outlined leaving the reader with a clear impression of why things are as they are. The text then moves on to discuss the more technical aspects in detail. Chapter 4 focuses on the major underlying data structures which support the search functions, namely the Inverted File System, N Gram Structures, PAT Trees and Signature Files. Chapter 5 looks in detail at the important process of indexing, the extraction of a semantic representation of an item to be stored as a data structure. Here a useful distinction is made between experimental techniques and those which are actually found in commercial systems. Chapter 6 describes the techniques for clustering index terms and items to create thesauri and document clusters to enhance retrieval and reduce the search overhead. Chapter 7 focuses on the issues and techniques for search (as distinct from the related activity of indexing), such as relevance feedback both in retrospective searching and the selective dissemination of information.

Some of the ideas and techniques described in these latter chapters can be quite complex. However, the more general reader’s interest is maintained by Kowalski’s
skill in conveying the essential essence of the topics discussed and through the text's strong philosophy of learning. The readers is treated to insightful snippets of the historical development of IR, such as the origins of WAIS, and an appropriate selection of illuminating examples. The exercises at the end of each chapter, in particular the tasks in Chapters 5 and 6, emphasise the importance of working out the algorithms for yourself. Moreover the central activities of indexing and search are updated in the discussion of ways in which they can support new forms of retrieval, such as browsing, bought about by developments in technology. Hyper-text is introduced in Chapters 4 and 5 and ways for exploiting this structure for new retrieval dimensions suggested. Very real, yet challenging, problems are raised to impress upon the reader that whilst this represents a renewed interest in IR it is not simply a matter of reinventing the wheel. For example, in Chapter 7 the possibilities of assisting the search process via intelligent agents extends the boundaries of IR to utilise techniques associated with Artificial Intelligence. The discussion is compact, but the reader is encouraged to explore the issues by following the references to recent experimental systems (such as those which employ collaborative intelligence for information dissemination) and conferences. Chapter 8 takes up the recent interest in complementary research from Human Computer Interaction (HCI), Cognitive Engineering and Perception which relate to how user-system interaction can facilitate retrieval, possibly enhanced by elaborate methods of the visual presentation of information. A range of theoretical visual forms and clues are demonstrated and their application to experimental systems outlined. Whilst we are not told of any evidence such interfaces have on retrieval effectiveness the important topic of evaluation, central to IR as a discipline, is addressed in Chapter 10. This discussion largely centres around a review of systems using the standardised results from recent TREC Conferences.

Whilst I would question the author's claim that the text provides sufficient detail to allow students to implement a simple IR system, its careful organisation and explanation of the issues and aspects of IR makes it accessible to readers of varying levels and interest (from system researchers and developers to those who are simply curious to know how their searchers are processed inside the "black box"). Kowalski evidently has a wealth of accumulated knowledge and experience of IR systems and any reader of his text will be left with a strong understanding of IR as a discipline, its historical development and its current, and possibly future, status.

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There exists a remarkable talent in management writers for taking a straightforward idea and elaborating it almost endlessly into procedures, activities, checklists, guidelines ... (I could elaborate almost endlessly). This tendency has been lamented by Tom Peters with regard to MB-O, Reg Revans in relation to action learning, and no doubt many others. At the first sight of the many sections and sub-sections dealing with library posts and activities which take up 103 pages of this book the heart sinks. However, spirits are restored on reading the introductory chapters. It soon becomes apparent that this work is not the product a literary machine tool set to produce endless deadpan pages, nor is it a “Hallelujah – Management!” text which claims to produce outstanding results “if you simply follow our thirty-step program”. This is an intelligent approach to be benefits and problems arising from the formulation of performance standards to be used in staff appraisal. It is informed by a realism shaped by honest reflection on some years of practical experience.

As the Preface states in its very first sentence, “Probably no other area of administration causes more anxiety – for both supervisor and supervisee – than performance appraisal”. The author sets out to assist managers in analysing library work and setting out the key tasks as performance standards which will provide the basis for the appraisal process – hence the long lists already referred to. Performance standards she defines as “statements that specify or describe work-related behaviours or job outcomes ... that can be evaluated in some objective manner”.

The problem with appraisal is that this desired objectivity is not easy to achieve – and this is recognised in the discussion which occupies the early chapters. “Staying out of trouble” consists of recommendations which will help in avoiding the worse pitfalls in drawing up performance standards, supplemented by the coverage of “The good and bad news about objective performance standards”. Here the “objectionable aspects” are addressed, including the possibilities of engendering a counter-productive competitiveness, the extra work generated by the processes, the difficulties which some supervisory staff may have with the uncomfortable situations, and the real difficulties in creating meaningful measurable standards in work which does not yield a physical product.

Those people who are deeply sceptical about the value of appraisal (including the reviewer) might argue that, having briefly but effectively highlighted the problems, Ms Goodson is too sanguine in her belief that they can be overcome by the positive action she recommends. In effect the argument has been lost and appraisal is now established in most organizations as a management norm, and she makes a number of irrefutably hard-nosed points in support of the process. In particular she emphasises the protection which a well designed system can offer against litigious employees seeking compensation for unfair or discriminatory treatment.
At present this is likely to be a more significant issue for U.S. than for U.K. library managers, but no doubt this will change with time.

The author is a member of the Performance Appraisal Review and Revision Committee at the State University of West Georgia and there is an emphasis on academic libraries apparent in the text but not in the book title. There is a thorough treatment of the tasks of various paraprofessional posts, such as Serials Assistant, Off-campus Services Assistant, Cataloguing Assistant. A wide range of professional posts is equally thoroughly covered and the treatment is contemporary enough to include Library Webmaster. Ms. Goodson has also had experience in public libraries and the post of Branch Librarian and Children's Librarian are featured from that specific context.

Clearly this is a practical book aimed at library managers rather than academics and is likely to prove a useful tool not only in developing performance standards, but also in drawing up job descriptions and personnel specifications. Lecturers and students may find that the most useful part is the annotated bibliography, with a coverage of approximately 130 items from U.S. and U.K. sources. The aim is to guide users to helpful items and also “to save readers from wasting their time obtaining some items that show up in a literature search, but which are not really very helpful”.

In short, this work should be of particular interest to academic librarians but is sufficiently multi-faceted to be relevant to a wide range of readers concerned in various capacities with the management of information services.

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This is a very accessible text, which strives to present abstract concepts in words rather than algebra. Some of the explanations are rather condescending – for example, does he really need to explain what “per cent” means? There are good explanations of the basic concepts of statistics, a grasp of which is essential for any and every information professional. Clear instruction in number-handling will be of benefit to readers not confident of their mathematical skills, and the steps of the statistical process are carefully introduced.

There are plenty of down to earth examples of immediate relevance to librarians’ concerns addressing a wide range of library operations. The text is firmly relate to library practicalities, such as performance measurement and budgetary control, and readers are able to see quickly how techniques can apply to their own circumstances.
While declared to be a book on descriptive statistics, it has sections on variance, regression and correlation which belong more fully in the realms of inference. These sections are slightly over simplistic, in that the qualifications of probability are not adequately presented, though the usefulness of their descriptive aspects is well expressed.

Chapters have self assessment quizzes, and questions and problems for discussion. Answers to these are provided, and these help reinforce the teaching given in the text. There are useful for those who teach statistics and who are always looking for new examples for lectures and seminars (and, dare we admit it, examination questions).

Computers and software are mentioned occasionally, spreadsheets not at all. The bibliography is brief (and has one incredible omission) but represents a good range of topics.

This would be a very good addition to any reading list.

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This book is published in the British Library Research and Innovation Centre’s Innovation Report Series and describes primarily research funded by the British Library (BL) on the health care information sector. It “outlines much of this (i.e. BL funded) recent research and sets it in the context of the UK health care sector and the services which it provides to the public”. The book was published in 1997 and covers project work completed up until 1996, with some journal material and comment included into 1997.

Throughout the book Peter Merry provides the student, researcher and teacher with a most useful overview of recent work and also provides insights into ongoing and new themes of interest impacting on Library and Information Services (LIS) in the health care sector. His opening chapter entitled “Setting the scene”, does so, most efficiently, and in the concluding chapter entitled “Looking ahead” he rounds off his review and indicates emerging themes for LIS practitioners to take into account in providing and developing their services. Peter Merry notes the shift in emphasis to the primary health interface and the increasing importance of
patient access to information; he raises the issue of the role librarians do and could take for themselves, and points to the need for wider structures for organising health care information.

Since the book was published, change has continued apace in the NHS. For example:

- Health Service Guidelines on Library and Information Services were published in November 1997 (HSG (97) 47, 6 November, 1997) which indicate the need for Trusts to provide a good multidisciplinary LIS,
- the spring of 1998 has seen the introduction of Health Action Zones in many parts of the UK which will again provide an opportunity for the refocusing and development of LIS in all sectors of health care.

The thirteen chapters which form the main body of the book detail projects organised by theme. Chapters include coverage of the current main themes in health care:

- information for purchasers of health care,
- the influence of LIS on clinical practice,
- effective nurse education,
- the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary information retrieval methods,
- information on drugs and prescribing,
- information facilities within general practice,
- information for patients.

Each chapter describes project work in the narrower area of the chapter’s theme. The author skilfully interweaves the account with an analysis of important trends and material taken from journal articles and other sources. There is a good list of references supplied at the end of each chapter.

The focus of the book is on library-supplied, text-based information and information sources. This is a book primarily about information about a particular topic; it is not a book about the organisational role of information and information management in a knowledge management type of approach to the topic. The exception to this is chapter 11, “The key role of information in health management”. This does cover studies of electron information in its organisational context, primarily in relation to the work of the NHS Information Management Group which “has been charged with promoting the potential of information and IT for improving integrated health care and for increasing the efficiency and quality of health services.”

It has particularly fostered the development of electronic information management through the establishment and use of information systems including networks such as the NHSnet which is the “national network developed exclusively for the NHS. It is composed of a number of services which together support the communication needs of NHS organisations.”
The NHSnet is beginning to be used in relation to an increasing number of aspects of patient care by an increasing range of health practitioners as facilities and training for staff become available.

The book is comprehensive in its coverage of the main themes in the field and provides enough detail for readers to assess the usefulness to them of obtaining the full version of material cited. Peter Merry has concentrated on British Library funded research, although the book’s title does not indicate the limits of the book’s interests. Relevant research being undertaken in other organisations such as universities, the NHS R&D Departments, and in Trusts themselves, is therefore not identified and described alongside the British Library research which it complements. This is to be regretted and would make a good companion study to this present review. Despite this drawback, Peter Merry’s book is, in my opinion, definitely a book for libraries to hold on behalf of students, researchers and teachers.

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As organisations undergo change and restructuring, individuals will almost certainly need training in new skills as they are required to take on new roles and responsibilities. Training can also, however, act as a powerful ‘change agent’ in its own right, altering staff attitudes towards innovation and change and perhaps also demonstrating that the organisation cares about its staff. Training and development activities can thus improve morale and help staff feel part of a team during turbulent times.

June Whetherly addresses these issues in her latest title for the Library Training Guides series. The series is aimed at managers and practitioners and therefore takes an essentially practical stance to the process of training. This particular Training Guide does begin, however, with a chapter outlining some of the theories and ideas about change. This would be a useful chapter for teachers or lecturers in the field who need to give a class a brief introduction to some of the main concepts in this area. The theoretical discussion is effectively illustrated with practical examples of how the theories may be applied.

The next chapter discusses the role of training and development in achieving change. There is a disappointingly short discussion of the subject, however, and does not address satisfactorily how training can be a powerful tool for achieving organisational change. More discussion of how training can stimulate staff and
equip them with the ability to respond to, and cope with, the unexpected and new would have been appreciated.

The next three chapters address strategies that managers can employ to facilitate the smooth introduction of changes to the workplace, including managing individual responses to change, communication methods and involving staff in the change process. This is all solid, sensible advice helpfully illustrated with examples and anecdotes but the issue of how training can assist in these processes is not raised. These chapters would not be out of place in a change management manual or text book and although it would be difficult to discuss the management of change without addressing these issues, there is little guidance for managers on how training can assist in these processes.

The next chapter on group development, however, does address how training can build team spirit and encourage participation and involvement in the change process. This is a valuable if brief discussion of how training interventions can facilitate team development with suggestions for effective training exercises and activities, and the development opportunities offered by groups. Another useful chapter is that addressing how managers can overcome resistance to change. A concise review of why individuals may resist change is followed by an interesting discussion of the role that training and development activities can play in combating it. Whetherly is also, however, keen to point out that training is not a panacea and that is does have its limitations. She clearly states that, “Training is not a substitute for good management” and that some resistance to change may well be justified. In these cases communication and consultation should take precedence. The guide ends with discussions of change agents and the learning organisation.

The appendices of the Library Training Guides are often one of the most useful aspects of the series. In this case, the samples of working documents include outlines for Managing Change courses, examples of communication methods announcing changes and questionnaires surveying staff opinions of a library service. Generally, this is a useful guide for those needing brief, accessible guidelines for managing change. The role that training can play in this process is not always adequately addressed, however, and the cost of training and development programmes can alter staff attitudes towards change, they must be well designed and they can be time-consuming and costly.

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My first thought on reading this very practical guide was the oft quoted 55 per cent rule. I've always been fascinated by the research concerning this percentage success rate for answering reference questions. It becomes even more interesting when making comparisons with the medical and legal professions which we in LIS are so fond of doing. The idea that just under a half of patients coming under the surgeon's knife would fail to recover or that a similar number may be unjustly sent to prison because of a lawyer's inexpertise is a sobering thought. Why shouldn't library enquirer's expectations match the high expectations found in other professions? Should the traumatic circumstances make a difference to the accuracy with which questions are answered? No doubt you'll have your own views on the silliness (or not) of these comparisons. They do, however, help to focus attention on the challenges that surround the whole business of accurate responses to general and specific queries.

This lively guide is full of hints and tips and aimed squarely at LIS students or those new to the profession who have been plunged directly on to enquiry points. For such staff for whom this prospect may seem daunting, the author offers sound advice. The book forms part of a highly rated series edited by Sheila Pantry entitled "The Successful LIS Professional" and has been updated to include recent developments in the use of the Internet as a reference tool. The book's overall structure is logical and takes the reader step-by-step through the stages of an enquiry: understanding the question, establishing the enquirer's needs, choice of sources, meeting deadlines, referrals and presenting the answer. Its eight short chapters follow a consistent format, each beginning with "In this chapter you'll find out how to ..." and ending with "To recap ..." Throughout the chapters the author has used a set of half a dozen "typical" questions with which he illustrates each of the stages. This device can be a double-edged sword. In terms of continuity and seeing the questions through to a successful conclusion it is fine. But it is difficult to avoid the feeling that – inevitably – the questions have been artificially constructed and therefore somewhat divorced from reality. Perhaps some examples of more complex questions constructed from the question to the sources rather than vice versa would have been more realistic. At the very beginning of the book the author has helpfully – and, perhaps, provocatively – listed 25 multi-purpose reference sources which "you can't afford to ignore". Although this is rather overstated, I think the idea that there exists a core of printed or electronic sources which can satisfy a large proportion of queries is an attractive one. I'm sure we all have our own twenty-five. For the novice at the desk a working knowledge of a small number of sources is an excellent way of gaining a foothold in an area of information work for which there is no real substitute for experience. But you have to start somewhere.

This "one-stop" manual undoubtedly achieves the objectives laid down for it –
helpful to students and novices, full of useful techniques, an incremental approach and making best use of limited resources. I just feel that it has missed the opportunity to explore two important areas. Firstly, the issue about the extent to which the information professional provides the required answers or whether he/she should be showing the enquirer the route taken to those answers i.e. "do" versus "show". Particularly in some academic libraries where enquiry points may be swamped at times, there are implications of staff time and resources surrounding the educational model. Time spent "showing" now can become time saved "doing" later and, at the same time, the student (hopefully) learns some useful information-handling skills. Secondly, in the introduction we are shown the "enquiry form: the backbone of enquiry work". Thereafter, it is barely mentioned. This is a shame because such record-keeping — and it need not be written in great detail — can form the basis of staff training sessions and the pooling of knowledge and expertise. This sort of sharing of experience is essential for staff who sometimes feel isolated and frustrated "at the sharp end" of the service. In these days of charters, customer care, increased accountability and financial constraints, provision of enquiry services is coming under close scrutiny in all library and information sectors. Owen's book is firmly focussed on the core element of such a service — how to answer questions successfully. What is actually meant by "success" in terms of enquiry work is a debate for another day.

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