

Book Review

Ryan E. Hoover, ed., *The Library and Information Manager's Guide to Online Services*. White Plains, NY: Knowledge Industry Publications, Inc., 1980. \$24.50 paperback; \$29.50 hardback.

This Guide sets out to give advice on all aspects of online techniques. In general, the Editor has achieved a consistency of style among his contributors who demonstrate their expertise, write clearly and at an eminently practical level. Although slanted to U.S. operations with little mention of other parts of the world, the comments will be applicable to non-U.S. organizations. References are no younger than early 1980 (the book was published in November) and are cited with inconsistencies of style between chapters.

Hoover (29 pp., 42 refs.) gives a clear overview in Chapter 1 with a useful short history of the development of services. The interrelationship between system elements is described and the impact on conventional library operations is discussed. Kathleen E. Shenton (33 pp., 32 refs.) describes the type of databases available, categorized by broad subject headings. Chemistry is fully covered but the section on biology, medicine and toxicology is sparse, and details of Excerpta Medica online availability are missing although this major file was available publicly at the time on three services. Alice H. Bahr (31 pp., 5 refs.) describes the services of the three major U.S. services DIALOG, SDC and BRS, and lists the files available on them with details of the then-current prices, user aids and training facilities. Donald T. Hawkins (28 pp., 70 refs.) provides useful guidance for managers of an outline service, covering such aspects as disturbance to the conventional library routines, staffing, central or decentralized location, choice of equipment, interviews with requestors, document delivery costs and a timely reference to the White House Conference. The argument relating to the reasons why publishers are raising royalties is faulty and the Barwise report (The impact on user charges of the extended use of online information services, ICSU-AB, Paris, November 1978) could not have been read. John C. Blair, Jr.'s (32 pp., 28 refs.) chapter on measurement and evaluation is highly practical with examples of request forms and details of record keeping, statistics, budgeting, user satisfaction, psychological effects, Boolean logic effects and a strategy decision model. Cost-effective technological innovations such as intelligent terminals and floppy discs are included, and comments are given on the cross-evaluation of staff, services and equipment.

Bahr (18 pp., 12 refs.) considers the effectiveness of different methods of promoting online services and gives examples of publicity material. Budgeting for

promotion is detailed and the amount of promotion to avoid demand exceeding staff availability is discussed. Kristyn Kuroki (14 pp., 13 refs.) looks at training facilities offered by DIALOG, SDC and BRS. Level of training, costs, duration, frequency, content, location, free online training, time availability and restrictions, are covered. Training by the database producers, library schools, user groups, the desirability of in-house training by coworkers, and vendors' help for self-instruction are also considered. Hoover (35 pp., 15 refs.) thoroughly examines the 'nuts and bolts' of online searching, giving details of keyboard layout, use of Boolean logic, logical and relational operators in DIALOG, SDC and BRS. System commands and program messages in the three services are described, and the same search was performed in the INSPEC file with the resulting printouts reproduced. The merits of using controlled or uncontrolled indexing are discussed, as is inverted indexing. The chapter concludes with details of planning and performing the actual search. Mary C. Berger and Barbara Quint (16 pp., 9 refs.) briefly consider the *raison d'être* for user groups, the growth in numbers of such groups in the U.S.A. (only), and the services by and benefits from user groups that can be expected. In the final chapter, Hoover (5 pp., 13 refs.) reports prediction on the future of online services from different sources and links these to list likely developments. The changed nature of the activities of intermediaries with its sociological implications is interesting.

A useful bibliography (34 refs.) for further reading is provided and there is an adequate index with cross-references.

Altogether, the book achieves its objectives for a U.S. readership but could be expanded in a later edition to give coverage of European services. As networks improve and the world effectively shrinks, it will be increasingly commonplace for searchers in North America to wish to access the more than 1400 files available to Europeans (1981 Eusidic Database Guide), not all of which are available on U.S. vendor services.

In a word: the book is recommended.

Barrie T. Stern
Excerpta Medica
305 Keizersgracht
1000 BC Amsterdam
The Netherlands