

## Book Review

**A. van der Laan and A.A. Winters (eds.), *The Use of Information in a Changing World*. Proceedings of the 42nd FID Congress held in The Hague, The Netherlands, 24-27 September 1984. Amsterdam and New York: North-Holland, 1984. xii + 470 p. Dfl.140.00 / US\$53.75. Hardbound. ISBN 0 444 87554 9.**

This was a very speedy publication of conference proceedings; in fact, they reached me in impeccable offset-print even before the Congress was held. The Congress was split up over six sessions:

- *A* – Inaugural
- *B* – Use and non-use of information
- *C* – Use of information in science and research
- *D* – Use of information in agriculture
- *E* – Use of information in industry
- *F* – Confronting the user with special developments in information

Not counting things like the welcome address, there are forty-nine papers in the book, from a wide variety of countries. Together, they provide a good survey of global developments in information.

Of course it is an easy cliché to say that the quality of papers from a conference like this is mixed. But it cannot be the purpose of such a meeting to provide us with a high-level overview of the state of the art; it is much more a cross-fertilization between North and South, East and West.

Some highlights from the book:

- Hill: Information for middle management decision making (a down-to-earth look at managerial activities)
- Canisius: Stimulating information use
- Chen: Use of information in China (one of the few papers about the situation there)
- Hansis: Parliamentary information in West Germany
- Cronin: Information accounting

Two critical remarks:

1) There are some papers about user surveys which are based on sample sizes which are so small, that I would not dare to draw conclusions from them.

2) If you consider sessions *B–E* as a survey of the state of the art, *F* would seem to be forward-looking. In my opinion, its contents are meagre, taking into account the very fast developments in this area. What I'm missing is an authoritative outlook from an expert, e.g. from outside FID, to guide people all over the world to survive the confrontation.

The book is essential for university libraries as a record of global developments. For the practical animals in information technology, it does not give many hints for their day-to-day problems; however, it certainly contains thoughts for meditation.

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