

Grosch, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

Townley, Helen M. *Systems Analysis for Information Retrieval*. Institute of Information Scientists Monograph Series. A Grafton Book. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press; London: André Deutsch, 1978. 121p. \$13.50. ISBN 0-233-96920-9.

Exactly how does one go about designing and implementing an information retrieval system for a particular organization? What are the various options that the designers and programmers must choose among? How does it all work? One can get a pretty good feeling for the answers to these questions from this very readable little book of about ninety pages (plus a few appendixes).

The author has almost twenty years of experience designing and implementing information retrieval systems. In her book she has interspersed little gems of wisdom only that experience can give. These range from the seemingly trivial "never make a note of anything without dating it" to the key observation that the system is likely to veer off course, or flounder entirely. Hence the statement of project goals "is to be the most important single document . . . for obtaining (and keeping!) backing for the project and for keeping control of the evolving system as it comes into being."

It is refreshing to read someone who realizes that systems analysis is very subjective, "partly technique and partly flair." Townley realizes that there are numerous designs that can result from analysis and that we will create and destroy dozens of such seemingly clear-cut things as record specifications before we settle on one to actually implement.

In this book we are once again reminded that the job of the analyst is only possible if he or she can get people to talk—and it is important to talk to all levels of workers and to more than one at each level.

Townley takes great pains to demonstrate to us exactly how dumb the computer is (without going through the boring details of binary number systems!). By providing clear and concise descriptions of the concepts of files, records, and fields, as well as several major file and field addressing techniques, we can begin to get a picture of how sophis-

ticated systems are built out of simple elements. The illustrations of computer searching techniques (such as Boolean logic) bring out the work that computers do in information retrieval systems in order to perform their amazing feats.

The author's final word of warning is something that we are only now beginning to appreciate: "It must not be forgotten that the computer based service will not save labour: it will only permit more work to result from the same effort. Management must never underestimate the manpower and time that will be required to keep the new system working."

In short, this is a very down-to-earth and practical book on systems analysis for information retrieval, filled with good advice to those who are about to embark on projects in this field.—*Stephen M. Silberstein, University of California, Berkeley.*

Smith, Lynn S. *A Practical Approach to Serials Cataloging*. Foundations in Library and Information Science, volume 2. Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press, 1978.

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