

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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A Practical Approach to Serials Cataloging ostensibly aims to teach librarians how to catalog a serial, but for a number of reasons the text is not geared for instruction. The author has covered everything that might conceivably fall within the scope of serial cataloging and as a result has highlighted the problems without offering workable solutions. Through emphasis on coverage, organization and brevity have suffered. The future cataloger is not guided logically through the stages required to create a catalog entry, and the rambling text makes it difficult to extract the portions on the practical aspects of cataloging.

Of the eighteen chapters, only about eleven are concerned with the construction of a serial catalog entry. Basic cataloging tools and reference works essential to the cataloger are not mentioned in the opening portion of the text, nor is searching. Almost at once the reader is plunged into a discussion of serial entry, which focuses on rule six of the *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules* (AACR). When the discussion reaches AACR 6B1, the reader is not informed that only certain categories of material are covered by this rule, and that the exception accompanying the rule relates only to these categories.

The chapter on title changes discusses the pros and cons of earliest, latest, and successive entry cataloging without adequately identifying the major differences between the cataloging entries.

Large portions of chapter seven of AACR have been reproduced in the chapter on descriptive cataloging, but revised chapter six is rarely even cited. Yet rules from both of these chapters are followed when transcribing bibliographic data onto the catalog entry. Often the author claims the rules in chapter seven are obvious, but history has proved otherwise, for catalogers have been subjected to endless interpretations. Although she recommends practices and procedures that violate the AACR in this chapter and elsewhere in the text, she often does not make it clear that they are nonstandard.

Selection of the title page, which is crucial to accurate bibliographic description, is

mentioned briefly on page 97 in the chapter on descriptive cataloging. The author dismisses the subject because the majority of serials do not have title pages. The majority of periodical issues are published without title pages, but not the majority of serials. And even if her observation were true, the cataloger still has to know how to select a title page or a title page substitute. This erroneous statement is one of many that are made, particularly when the author embarks upon a discussion of serial cataloging at the Library of Congress.

Unfortunately, the impact of automation on serials cataloging in the past couple of years has dated the book prior to publication. For example, cooperative on-line cataloging, a result of the CONSER Project, is not mentioned.

An unusual and admirable feature of the book is the emphasis on the relation between technical and public service. Although excellent indexes and useful lists accompany the text, there is no glossary of cataloging and bibliographic terms. In fact, the author gives little attention to defining the library terms she uses.

Regretfully, for all of the above reasons, the text fails in its main purpose, to teach the basic principles of serial cataloging.—*Judith P. Cannan, Washington, D.C.*

ABSTRACTS

The following abstracts are based on those prepared by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources, School of Education, Syracuse University.

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Planning Information Services in the Liberal Arts College Library. By Richard E. Miller and Bruce Morton. 1977. 27p. ED 154 780. MF—\$0.83; HC—\$2.06.