Book Review

An Introduction to Library and Information Work, Anne Totterdell with contributions from Jane Gill and Alan Hornsey. Facet Publishing, London, 2005. 210 pp. ISBN 1-85604-557-9.

The first edition of *An Introduction to Library and Information Work* appeared in 1998 under the title *The Library and Information Primer*. This new, third edition is expanded and revised to reflect changes in the profession, information technology, management practices and the current challenges confronting information work. However, as with the first edition, the aim of the authors remains to provide a standard text for paraprofessional library staff and for the foundation year of professional library and information courses. The book has been written with the express purpose of supporting NVQ and City and Guilds qualifications for paraprofessional but also with the needs in mind of paraprofessional staff seeking accreditation under the new CILIP Framework of Qualifications. The authors also hope that the subject matter may well provide an introduction to library and information work for the interested layman.

In order to achieve these aims the text provides an outline of the major types of library and information provision and their institutional structures. We are taken on a Cook's tour of the library and information world with a focus on the kinds of knowledge, practical skills and competencies needed for the effective and efficient delivery of library and information services. It must be said that this review is conducted very much with an eye to the public sector together with limited coverage of academic provision. There is much less emphasis on the structures and functions of information work in the commercial and voluntary sectors. However, more generically, the book deals with the nuts and bolts of recruitment, supervision, education and training giving useful, practical advice. A short chapter then covers library cooperation in the UK illustrated with a case study based on the South Western Regional Library System (SWRLS). One chapter is devoted to the management of library stock and the implications of the need to include a range of new media. Here again the emphasis is on public sector provision. However, we are introduced to the practical tasks involved, for example, in the selecting, ordering and processing of library stock. This chapter also includes a very helpful bibliography of key reference sources. A chapter on services to users draws together ideas on customer care, the delivery of traditional lending and reference services with the demands for digital information service provision.

A strong theme that emerges throughout the book is, unsurprisingly perhaps, the ubiquity of IT in information and library work at every level from government policy to basic library housekeeping tasks. Alan Hornsey addresses this in his chapter on information technology in the library which is an uneasy mix of an introduction to basic IT concepts and terminology, processes of practical IT management and broader government initiatives. Hornsey argues that the 'virtual library' is unlikely to replace the physical library but rather the physical library will remain to provide an access to the virtual or digital library. This may have been a useful context in which to address the current debate about whether the expansion of IT in the public library sector has been to the detriment of book stock and the maintenance of small community libraries (Davies, 2006).

Jane Gill has revised and updated Lyn Pullen's contribution in previous editions on the management perspective. This provides a very good introduction to the major aspects of library management, for example, performance measurement and assessment. These management and business imperatives are set in the broader context of national public library strategy laid out in *Framework for the Future: libraries, learning and information in the next decade* (2003). Again the principal focus here is on the public sector but this nevertheless provides an excellent demonstration of the extent to which public library provision is increasingly a creature of government policy. A new departure, however, for this edition is the inclusion of a final chapter which aims to provide an international perspective on library and information work by contrasting the situation in the developed and the developing worlds. This is a welcome expansion to the scope of the book but readers may feel that the topic is dealt with rather too briefly and schematically. This chapter also by implication points up a missing European dimension to the book.

The opening chapter of the book introduces a set of important issues for the future library and information profession. These include the pressing concerns of funding; the future role of libraries in the context of political and technological imperatives; the uncertain status and image of the profession; and a variety of ethical issues including gender and equality, and censorship. I would have welcomed a balancing concluding chapter which would have returned to these issues in the light of the intervening discussions. However, the book is written is a clear, straightforward and accessible style without undue jargon, management speak or technobabble. Throughout readers are directed to useful further printed and electronic sources. In addition it has helpful appendices on 'Useful sources of information' and a 'Glossary of abbreviations and acronyms'. Overall there is no doubt that this text will provide a useful guide to library and information work for its target student audience.

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References

Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2003), *Framework for the Future: libraries, learning and information in the next decade*, London, DCMS, www.culture.gov.uk/global/publications/archive_2003/framework_future.htm.

Davies, C. (2006), Minister threatens to step in to halt library closures, *The Daily Telegraph*, 28th January, p.13.