Reviews

edited by Philip Barker

Sally Brown, Steve Armstrong and Gail Thompson (eds.), *Motivating Students*, London: Kogan Page, 1998. ISBN: 0-7494-2494-X. Paperback, 214 pages. £18.99.

Student motivation: the black box which concerns so many of us in higher education, and potentially the answer to all our problems. If we could crack this one, students would use the library and the Web and get their assignments in on time. They would come to our lectures and tutorials having prepared; they would ask interesting and challenging questions; and we would be able to reveal to them the excitement and charm of our chosen discipline. They would all pass everything, and the reputation of our institutions would increase. So does this book have the answers?

It is divided into four sections, although the chapters do not always seem to fall obviously into one group rather than another. The first section, 'The impact of teaching on student motivation', contains six chapters on curriculum design and teaching methods; there are useful references for those new to the area, although it is perhaps less stimulating than the later, more specific, sections. The second group of six essays, 'Motivating diverse students', makes greater use of psychological models of motivation, and considers the responses of different demographic groups to the higher-education context. The third section, 'The impact of university practices on motivation', contains five chapters, three on curriculum design (projects, work-based learning, and work experience) and two on more general issues: the impact of stress on student motivation, and cultural attitudes towards learning and teaching. This latter, 'Learning as an aesthetic practice: motivation through beauty in higher education' by Alan Bleakley, actually appears to belong in a different book. It is polemical in the midst of papers written in cooler experimental discourse, and laments the mechanistic, vocational culture which has replaced the joy in learning shared by students and tutors in the fifteenth century. This paper bypasses the issues that others in the book do attempt to address: how to protect the student's enjoyment of learning and the sanity of staff in a mass system with ever-reducing funding. However, it does make the point that much of what is said about student motivation is already known: that different students learn best in different contexts, and those who are motivated by intrinsic factors tend to do better than those who are motivated by extrinsic factors.

The value here of revisiting existing models of motivation drawn from psychology or management studies is that they highlight the complexity of students' motives in a system where it is not unusual to hear rather reductive assessments of students' failure (for example, because the students are perceived not to be very bright or to be lazy). This book reminds us of how many factors are at play, and how diverse students are in their reasons for being in higher education and their reasons for learning.

The final section deals with the impact of assessment on student motivation, and emphasizes the

centrality of assessment to student behaviour: '[. . .] it seems reasonable to conclude that students are primarily influenced by the assessment system and that individual lecturers have only a limited effect' (Newstead, p. 198).

So for the lecturer who might come looking for a quick-fix solution, there appear sadly to be no easy answers. However, the case studies and models presented here would be a good starting place for anyone thinking of reviewing curriculum and assessment practices in order to enhance the motivation of students.

Shân Wareing, University of Wales College, Newport

Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt and Yoni Ryan (eds.), *Quality in Postgraduate Education*, London: Kogan Page, 1994. ISBN: 0-7494-1413-8. Paperback, 177 pages. £14.95.

The issue of quality has been a consistent, if problematic, theme in higher education globally throughout the 1990s. As we enter the next millennium, it seems unlikely that there will be genuine consensus in UK higher education about what quality is, and how 'it' might best be facilitated – a view only partly supported by the editors of this book who suggest that the term *quality* 'has a generally understood meaning, but [. . .] is very difficult to define' (page 1). As Roger Holmes suggests in his introduction to the book: 'The major beneficiaries of a well-run quality assurance system in higher education are the students and graduates' (page xi). But in this perspective 'quality' appears to be something that happens to the student. It is the set of systems, procedures, benchmarks and the like, which underpin educational delivery. In the context of research-student supervision 'quality' tends to mean 'quality assurance measures' which support the process of supervision. Given this, for Holmes the book is:

> [. . .] very timely and appropriate, in the light of the increased awareness and implementation of quality assurance principles and practices, and the central position of research postgraduate training programmes within universities. The book will assist universities, faculties, departments and schools, as well as individual supervisors, in improving the quality and effectiveness of research postgraduate training and supervision responsibilities. (page xi)

There are, of course, other, competing, definitions of quality. In a book published in 1991 (*Delivering Quality in Vocational Education*, London: Kogan Page), Dave Muller and I suggested that quality might most usefully be perceived in terms of the transformatory process by which individual learners increasingly take ownership of their own learning. This notion may not be fully convergent with the current standards *Zeitgeist* of the Quality Assurance Agency, but it does open up interesting debates about the purpose of postgraduate study, and its benefits to the learner in a policy context advocating lifelong learning. Not least, it problematizes notions of standardization and comparability of level and achievement in higher education. As such it makes 'quality' an explicitly subjective concept.

Aspects of this debate permeate this book. Written primarily as a guide for those supervising postgraduate students, it draws heavily on Australian and UK case-study experience to offer both organizational systems and pedagogic approaches to improve research supervision. The book is divided into two parts. Part 1 consists of six short chapters exploring issues of quality and institutional research culture. On offer is a diverse range of topics, from institutional planning to best support research students, to issues of gender and postgraduate supervision and the particular challenges of supervising 'overseas' students. Each chapter is separately authored with the majority based on experience in Australian higher education during the early 1990s. As with all texts of this kind, there is much to gain from the professional insights of others in the field. However, the brevity of each chapter tends to encourage an uncritical descriptive account of the topic rather than one that effectively evaluates the impact of the actions or suggestions presented on service quality. This is most explicit in Jan Whittle's interesting description of an institutional model for managing research degree supervision in which she honestly concludes:

> Systematic evaluation of the policy framework, organizational support, and staff development programmes discussed . . . form an essential aspect of the University of South Australia's quality control of the management of research degree supervision. At the time of writing . . . it was too early to comment on the effectiveness of these new initiatives [. . .]. (page 48)

Part 2 follows a similar format. Eight chapters are grouped under the heading Educational Processes to Achieve Quality, compressed into 100 pages. The checklists and advice offered in this part of the book will be of value to those new to student supervision. Indeed a number of the chapters will be of interest for those supervising Level 3 undergraduate research or similar-level professional courses, particularly Robert Brown's chapter on managing writing, and Estelle Phillip's chapter on avoiding communications breakdowns between the supervisor and the student. A couple of the other chapters are less effective in delivering a clear link between what they have to say and the thorny concept of quality. The final chapter addresses the key issue of power in supervision and, less explicitly here but potentially more importantly, summative assessment:

> Understanding power to be both structural [. . .] and relational seems to be important for understanding the issues of concern in supervision, especially those of poor communication: there is the material reality of the supervisor's more powerful structural position and the way this position can be used [. . .]. We have heard too many stories of the abuse of power [. . .] to be able to discount its operation and effectiveness. Yet at the same time we can decentre sovereign power because [. . .] supervisory power is neither complete, nor is it unmediated by students: both the student and the supervisor are acting subjects who may act on the actions of the other. (page 168)

The authors of this chapter go on to offer an example of guidelines for supervision based on experience at the University of Auckland. The negotiated elements of these guidelines will be familiar territory for those with experience of independent study approaches or learner-contract-learning. Equally familiar will be the Althusserian assertion that these forms of negotiation offer sites for resistance 'to the historically reproduced power relationships that are dominant in conventional universities' (page 176).

Quality in Postgraduate Education offers a range of advice and insight into the complex process of research-student supervision. It also touches on a range of associated issues that impact on student performance and the power relationships that exist between supervisors and students. As with many edited books of this kind, the writing is occasionally uneven and too heavily based on descriptive case studies. None the less, the text offers a number of useful insights that will be of particular interest to those new to postgraduate student supervision.

Peter Funnell, University College Suffolk

Eta de Cicco, Mike Farmer and James Hargrave, *Using the Internet in Secondary Schools*, London: Kogan Page, 1998. ISBN: 0-7494-2522-9. Paperback, 154 pages. £15.99.

There is no escaping the current explosion in communications technologies across the entire education sector. Most readers will be affected by the resulting impact in their own HE and FE institutions, and could understandably by-pass a book with a title such as this one as irrelevant.

But hold on a minute. We claim to be entering an age of lifelong learning, where the educational needs of everyone, irrespective of age and background, are recognized. If we accept that there is (or at very least aspire to) a learning continuum where age need not define the nature of provision, it stands to reason that the potential of the Internet as an educational tool should be of interest to all. In this respect this book represents a timely and very welcome addition to the plethora of related titles, previously aimed largely at educators working in tertiary education. Our government is encouraging greater use of the Internet within schools, and this book should find a ready-made audience.

The brief descriptions of all three authors on the rear cover serve to alert the reader to the fact that the book should stand out from the crowd. Eta de Cicco works for the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA) which continues to play a central role in the effective uptake of information and communications technologies within schools. Mike Farmer and James Hargrave both work in HE but claim experience in supporting learners of all ages in the use of the Internet. While only 150 pages long, their book successfully manages to introduce the skills required to access and contribute to the World Wide Web as well as acknowledging a range of curriculum areas that might be facilitated through online activities.

The book is divided into two parts of similar size. Successive chapters in Part 1 provide tips for using, searching and designing for the Web, as well as a brief overview of other useful tools.

Part 2 discusses practical examples of ways in which the Internet can be used to support learning in specific areas of the secondary-school curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4.

The authors deserve credit for providing broad coverage of all of these topics in a way that should be both enlightening to the uninitiated yet engaging enough to hold the interest of more experienced readers. This is partly due to the liberal reference to Web links which entice the reader to go online – my copy of the book has accumulated plenty of bent page corners opposite URLs deserving further investigation. I wonder if the authors or their publishers considered the increasingly popular practice of providing a dedicated Web site to complement the book by offering more convenient access to the many links they recommend? If not, they ought to have done.

The authors succeed, then, in providing a worthy introduction to the Internet as a learning resource, but the fact that the book was obviously intended to be an introductory text perhaps underlies its greatest weakness. The depth of detail that can be provided within 150 pages is limited. Some topics receive greater attention than others – perhaps this is a consequence of the way the book was written and subsequently compiled from the efforts of several authors. For example, a whole chapter (18 pages) is devoted to tips on searching the Web, while email is relegated to only six pages. Email may not arouse as much popular interest as surfing the Web, nor indeed prove as educationally useful (I do appreciate that some would disagree), but it does deserve greater recognition and description in a book of this kind. Furthermore 'closed conferencing' occupies one page, UseNet occupies two, and IRC follows up the rear filling a meagre half a page. This imbalance only serves to reinforce the popular misconception that the Web *is* the Internet – in this respect, this part of the book might make one think that it might more fittingly be called Using the World Wide Web in Secondary Schools.

Part 2 acts as a guide to using the Internet for teaching in the following areas: Science (Physics, Chemistry and Biology), Mathematics, English, Geography, History, Design and Technology, Modern Languages, Music, Art and Religious Education. Most topics are well researched, and the authors have provided real resources for use in real classrooms. Each activity typically includes useful teacher notes and pupil activity sheets. However, I am not sure how the book's charming Copyright notice – 'Yours to have and to hold, but not to copy' – will affect the use of these printed resources. Fortunately, the recommended activities often encourage the pupils to exploit different aspects of the Internet by searching the Web, downloading files, emailing information providers, and even constructing basic Web pages. My only concern is that nothing stands still on the Web and, probably sooner rather than later, the multitude of interesting URLs referred to throughout the book will change.

But this book does represents a useful resource. It is not particularly cheap for its length, but then it obviously represents the distillation of considerable expertise, knowledge and experience. It should find a place on the desks of all teachers, not only those with an interest in or responsibility for IT, and not only those engaged in secondary-school education. Hopefully, its deserving popularity will facilitate further refinement of future editions and the regular updating of content.

Brian Boullier, University of Bradford

Leslie Rae, *Using Presentations in Training and Development*, London: Kogan Page, 1997. ISBN: 0-7494-2423-0. Paperback, 218 pages. £19.99.

This book claims to cover 'every aspect of the use of presentations in all types of training and development programmes'. As the author is a management and training consultant, the book is aimed more at those who need to make presentations in a business setting as opposed to the academic world. That said, most of the information will be relevant to those making any kind of presentation, and could certainly help a novice think through the approach to use in order to convey information more effectively. It could also be relevant to students asked to make a presentation assessed as part of their course-work.

The book contains an introduction, 11 main chapters, and an appendix with a flowchart of the process to follow in developing a presentation, a brief bibliography and a resource list. At the start of each chapter is a list of key points, and within chapters are boxed summaries of the advice given. Many chapters also contain suggested activities, designed to help the presenter think through the issues involved. The

layout of the book is relatively clear, and structured to allow readers to dip in selectively if they wish.

The introduction acknowledges the fear that having to give a presentation can induce, offering the possibility, with practice, of learning the techniques for a good presentation. It then describes the presentation layout of the book. The first chapter outlines what must be considered before embarking on planning a presentation. Two chapters follow this detailing the planning stages, taking into account the options in methods of presentation and, once an approach has been determined, how to fill this out to a complete plan. The fourth chapter covers the preparation needed to ensure that your presentation runs smoothly, in terms of knowing your audience size, room layout and guaranteeing that any equipment needed is available. Chapters 5 and 6 explore the types of visual aid that can be used, their preparation and effective use. Chapter 7, entitled Personal Presentation, covers how to select a suitable wardrobe in order to make the right impression on your audience.

The next chapters deal with the presentation itself. Chapter 8 goes through what the audience sees, how to ensure you are ready to start the presentation, how to deal with nervousness, how to open the presentation to gain your audience's attention, and how to set an appropriate mood. Chapter 9 deals with making sure you get your message across, including details such as your posture and the use of your voice, controlling your own mannerisms, and how to make your case effectively. Special attention is given to how to end a presentation in a positive manner which is likely to prompt questions, and Chapter 10 discusses how to handle such questions, including suggestions on how to deal with difficult questions and difficult people. The chapter finally progresses to making an assessment of your own performance to feed back into future presentations. The final main chapter gives tips on practising presentations, and how to assist a novice presenter to learn the necessary skills.

I found the overall approach of the book to be helpful, providing simple ideas and reassurance without being patronizing. The lists of key points will provide a useful reminder for someone working through the process of planning a presentation whether as an experienced or first-time presenter. The suggested activities may help to build confidence, although many of these are group activities, presupposing that a training course or group exists to provide support.

If you are an experienced presenter who has previously considered the quality and scope of your presentations, you will probably find no novel ideas or suggestions in the book. The material covered is largely standard advice with which many will be familiar. However, as the structure of this book allows you to dip in as needed, it could well provide a useful refresher course even for experienced presenters who feel the need to brush up on their skills. For the novice or nervous presenter it provides a step-by-step guide to producing a coherent, well-received talk, and should serve to boost confidence. And while there may be no totally new ideas in the book, all of the relevant information I could think of has been covered. I found it clear, readable and in itself well presented, and it could prove a valuable resource for both teaching and learning presentation skills.

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R. Hudson, S. Maslin-Prothero and L. Oates (eds.), *Flexible Learning in Action: Case Studies in Higher Education*, London: Kogan Page, 1997. ISBN: 0-7494-2391-9. Paperback, 197 pages, £18.99.

This is a book that is full of good ideas which illustrate the diversity of approaches to flexible learning in many subjects and at all levels in higher education. It is part of Kogan Page's Staff and Educational Development Series, and is a collection of case studies contributed by members of three electronic discussion groups representing the UK, Australia and the USA.

'Flexible learning' has a plethora of definitions. In their introduction, the editors establish the context by stating that for them it is 'student-centred learning, and is about meeting student needs using whatever methods of teaching and learning are most appropriate'. In response to their brief, contributors have fleshed out this definition by describing initiatives that improve access for students, give them control over what and how they learn, enable them to take responsibility for learning, and provide appropriate support. Not surprisingly, the main drivers for these initiatives included a desire to improve quality of learning, increasing student diversity, equal opportunities and access, labour market demands for life-long learners, development of

transferable skills for employment, and/or funding constraints.

Each case study comprises one of 31 brief chapters which are grouped into four main sections dealing with flexibility for campus-based learners (1), work-based learners (2), skills development (3), and institutional strategies for supporting flexible learning (4). Each section begins with a brief introduction which summarizes the common elements within the group, and the innovative aspects of each study. These introductions are a useful overview and a tool to select chapters of particular interest. The book finishes with a short conclusion which identifies the current trends in provision of flexible learning emerging from all the case studies.

All the initiatives described in Section 1, 'Flexibility for learners on campus', are at modular or unit level with changes aimed primarily at responding to students' needs and improving their learning. This is often done by using resources such as interactive texts and workbooks, video, aural packages, Web-based materials and multimedia, with the aim of improving students' independence and learning skills. The move towards electronic provision is signalled by several of the studies, such as modules entirely delivered by email (Smith; Fulkerth) and a framework for students to engage in case-based problem-solving, research and discussion through a networked learning environment (Buckner and Davenport). All the contributors stress the crucial importance of supporting flexible learners; two interesting examples are the use of learning journals and group discussions to improve and share learning strategies (Mühlhaus and Löschmann), and peer-assisted study sessions (Witherby).

The case studies in Section 2, 'Flexibility for work-based learners', describe work with employers and professional bodies to tailor curriculum and course design to meet the needs of those in work. Programmes of this nature allow student ownership of learning, but need relevant outcomes, relevant and student-centred assessment strategies, and peer and institutional support mechanisms. Although some studies are about development of distance-learning courses, more value has been placed on opportunities for reflection in course design (Oldroyd). McArdle and McGowan discuss a real paradigm shift in course design to one of effective practice rather than content, a fundamental change in philosophy – which encourages action research and reflective practice. In another bold move, nurses have implemented a module in which outcomes, level of study, methods for achieving outcomes and assessment mode are all negotiated with the student (Shipway) – surely the ultimate in flexibility.

The chapters in Section 3 describe 'Flexible approaches to skills development' as universities respond to pressure for development of students' skills for lifelong application. One broad-based effort to incorporate skills development into the curriculum involves the production of generic skills packs for use by tutors in their classes in any subject (Bingham and Drew). In a unique project, an institution has linked with community educators to provide for disadvantaged students without traditional entry qualifications by creating transitional modules, student mentoring, staff development and support for personal development (Denning). Ure describes a project to build confidence and core skills of non-traditional entrants by profiling and personal development planning. Macauley and Pagnucci tell of a team-based, project-centred approach to teaching writing for purpose but which develops teamwork, evaluation skills, time management, leadership, organizational skills, research and independence; most importantly, the change from traditional delivery has resulted in busy, energetic student-driven learning activity. Other initiatives include development of numeracy (Cock and Pickard), library skills (Bainbridge) and research skills (Steward).

I found Section 4, 'Institutional strategies for supporting flexible learning', the most interesting since it illustrates that some institutions are thinking positively and constructively about meeting the challenges of flexible learning. The first chapter in this section makes clear that universities must think carefully about structures, support, administration and curriculum planning to meet future needs in delivering flexible and distance learning (Lynch). McGhee further illustrates that management of flexible learning must be incorporated into the routine operational, contractual, administrative and budgetary activities of an institution including changes to delivery of lectures and tutorials, deployment of staff, contracts and appraisal. In a similar move to improve performance of all staff and students, one university provides an Open Access Student Information Service (OASIS) and has plans to put all documents and course materials into electronic form (Barker). Other strategic decisions include a sensible

solution to mixed-mode learning by purchasing materials from elsewhere (Fallows), a consideration of the role of libraries in distance education (Cavanagh) and a programme of staff development to support flexible learners (Robinson). The final two chapters describe systematic plans to increase flexible learning by working from vision to policy to implementation and development of a supporting infrastructure (Anderson; Wade).

Like many other Kogan Page books, this one will appeal to readers looking for a new idea or a solution to a problem; it is a book well formatted for 'dipping into'. With a broad coverage of initiatives at different institutional levels, it should be useful for teachers and administrators, but especially for staff developers. My main question, however, is why are contributors only from three countries, and what are we missing?

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Adam Warren, David Brunner, Pat Maier and Liz Barnett, *Technology in Teaching and Learning: An Introductory Guide*, London: Kogan Page, 1998. ISBN 0-7494-251568. Paperback, 138 pages. £19.99.

Pat Maier, Liz Barnett, Adam Warren and David Brunner, *Using Technology in Teaching and Learning*, London: Kogan Page, 1998. ISBN 0-7494-2082-0. Paperback, 132 pages. £19.99.

Technology in Teaching and Learning: An Introductory Guide and its companion *Using Technology in Teaching and Learning* come from the School of Education at the University of Southampton. They should be associated in the reader's mind with the very successful computer-based learning environment MicroCosm. The books appeared originally as an output from a TLTP project (Technology in Teaching and Learning: A Guide for Academics). There is a separate video which provides case studies; this is not reviewed here.

What do the authors have to say to us? How useful would it be for a learning technologist to have these companion volumes on his or her bookshelf ?

Before I give an answer to those questions, it is important to clarify the authors' use of the term *technology*. They use it to mean three things. First, the artefacts of technology: computers, etc. Secondly, the applications and systems they support, e.g. Web browsers. Thirdly, an analysis of teaching and learning in higher education. The mixture of teaching, learning and technology is the mix we should expect from such books. Without a consideration of what we do as teachers and how our students come to better understand subject knowledge as a result of using all the adjuncts of information technology, we would not be learning technologists. A knowledge of the artefacts of technology, on its own, is sterile. The modern university teacher has to have a grasp of so many ideas and skills, in addition to his or her own subject expertise, that one wonders how anyone keeps up to date in their discipline, let alone in learning technology. These books require the serious reader to reflect on his or her own 'level of technology capability'. The self-assessment is valid, inasmuch as it gets the reader reflecting on interests, skills and competencies. Such self-assessments are not a reliable or valid prediction of competence – rather they start the reader reflecting, that is, *thinking about* the ideas and concepts. It is important for teachers to become aware of learning technology, whatever it might be. Thinking leads to self-awareness. Self-awareness is a component of self-efficacy, and this in turn is a major component in self-regulation. Self-regulation is that system process that ensures competent teachers have the right skills at the right level at the right time. The self-assessment tests engage the reader in thinking: not a bad thing for any teacher!

What about the layout of the books and their usability? They use icons to cue the reader with activities, important points, warnings etc. The design of each page is well thought out, with an easy typographic style and appropriate screen-shots, tables, summary boxes and so forth. I particularly liked the familiar applications that are used to explain computer communications, such as WinQVT, Eudora, Generic Telnet and Netscape. The authenticity provided by such familiar tools is important, as it reassures readers that the tools they require are easily available and probably on their office computer. The use of questions such as 'What does the Internet have to offer?' gets readers engaged in thinking about what to do and what they already know.

And I like books that have questions (a good trick when reading is to look for explicit questions or to invent for oneself an implicit question). These books provide good focused questions that make the reader think. Authentic examples with simple tasks are important in maintaining interest and improving competence.

Keeping up to date with Internet communication is an almost impossible task. The advice on HTML and browsers in these books is now a bit out of date, but the example links provided will give the inquisitive reader a good starting point to find out, for example, how to put mathematical equations in a Netscape browser. Where would you – the reader of this review – find out about how to insert a square root function in a Web page if your students were using Netscape 4? I tested a few of the URLs to see if they still exist – a common problem with such books is that example URLs often disappear before the book is printed. Such is the progress in providing Web pages and the uncontrolled nature of the Internet. I tried four URLs and was successful in three. Not – I hasten to add – an overall 75 per cent success rate, rather an indication of the transient nature of URLs and the vagaries of Web servers, based on a small sample.[1]

In the volume *Using Technology*, there is a valiant effort to get readers to think seriously about how to do something about improving the learning experience of their students. A lot of use is made of graphics and tables with ratings of 'effort' in terms of a five-point box scale. This looks very nice, but it is a bit 'Janet and John' in its simplicity. Another criticism is that the books do not have an Index. So, if a reader wanted to know what a URL is and what it signifies, it would mean scanning through both books before finding a definition, but not an explanation.

To answer my question about the use of these books on my bookshelf, I would say *quite useful*. I consider myself fairly familiar with the technology and the pedagogic theory. I have been reminded of things I knew (not a bad thing), and had to think again about what I might do with computers, and what is teaching, and how does learning occur, and . . . The books do encourage finding out about what is available. One has to get on to a computer and try a few things, as well as thinking seriously and deeply about learning. In that sense the books are *really useful*. They activate the reader and encourage experimentation and – I have to say – failure. My failures were instructive and therefore I cannot really complain. In fact, the books encouraged me sufficiently to try out some tools, and helped me think about what I could do. My reservations above are about the validity and reliability of the self-assessment tests. I do not think I am prepared to admit I am 'professional' in how I feel about technology in my lectures, neither am I 'cynical'. The self-assessment did make me think about, if not confront, my feelings.

The books have plenty of references to other sources, books as well as Internet resources. So, can you – reader – find out how to put mathematical functions in a Netscape 4 browser? Do you know how students learn basic IT skills? How can you cache Web pages to minimize costs to your department or cost centre? There are still plenty of questions to be answered and more books – like these – to be written.

Ray McAleese, Heriot-Watt University

Note

[1]The offending URL is actually at Heriot-Watt University on a server I use.

Jack Kessler, *Internet Digital Libraries: The International Dimension*, Artech Boston, USA: House Publishers, 1996. ISBN: 0-89006-875-5. Hardback (A5), 265 pages. £49.00.

As the Internet becomes more widely available, educators, students and researchers are increasingly turning to it as a global source of information; indeed, it is often likened to an enormous electronic encyclopedia. This book-based metaphor is now being strongly reinforced by the growing number of digital library systems that are becoming accessible through the Internet. Such library systems form the focus for the contents of this book.

Its 22 chapters are organized into four basic sections:

- Setting the stage (Part 1)
- Specifics – National (Part 2)
- Specifics – International (Part 3)
- Generalities (Part 4).

Four appendices, a glossary, subject index and annotated bibliography are also provided.

Part 1 of the book is the shortest. Its three concise chapters provide various items of background information intended to help readers understand subsequent parts of the book. Essentially, this section sets the scene by presenting some historical sketches that describe the rapid development of the Internet (through its commercialization), the availability of different sorts of online digital information, and, more importantly, the evolution of digital

libraries themselves. According to the author (p. 22) 'digital libraries were born in the United States in the 1980s'. However, important contributions from other countries are acknowledged and subsequently discussed in later parts of the book.

Part 2 is by far the longest. It employs an 'inductive and international' approach in order to attempt to reconcile an important concern of online digital information providers and librarians – that is, access to electronic information in textual, pictorial and sonic forms. The 11 chapters that make up this part of the book explore specific digital-library initiatives in selected countries. For example, Chapter 4 describes the flexible centralized approach to digital information provision used in France (through the use of Minitel and the World Wide Web), while Chapter 5 outlines the more rigid centralized mechanism used in Singapore. Subsequent chapters cover activity in China, India, Australia, Thailand, the UK, Hungary, Japan, Indonesia and, of course, the USA. Naturally, the Internet and the Web are fundamental 'ingredients' in the activity taking place in each of these countries.

The five chapters of the third section of the book cover various cross-boundary topics such as language, politics and political structures, technical standards, business and international organizations. The section begins with a discussion of the diversity and complexity of the many human languages, and the problems (such as cost) that they pose for online information storage and access using computers. Following the political ramifications presented in Chapter 16, the next chapter provides a discussion of the need for international technical standards. It outlines the importance and limitations of some of current standards, such as ISO 9660 (for CD-ROMs), ISO 8879 (SGML) and the various members of the Z39 series of standards. Chapter 18 deals with business issues; here the author claims (p. 173) that: 'The growth engine of the Internet for now is the commercial firm, not the government agency'. He then goes on to ponder on how the US-driven 'profit, return-on-investment, money' rationale will scale internationally within the context of online-information provision and digital-library development. The final chapter in this section discusses some of the digital-library activities being undertaken by international organizations such as the EU, RLG, OCLC and the Consortium of European Research Libraries. In concluding this chapter (and Part 3), the author states (p. 183): 'The specifics of international digital libraries development reveal needs . . . that will not be met satisfactorily by the private enterprise model that is currently driving development in the United States.'

The last three chapters (20 to 22) that make up the final section of the book are devoted to various 'generalities'. The thrust here is a discussion of three general problems that confront international digital-library efforts. The first (Chapter 20) concerns 'mythologies of objectivity' and value-free media with respect to digital science; the question posed is: 'Is the pipe neutral?' The second problem (Chapter 21) concerns 'antiquated paradigms for information services provision' and the identity crisis of libraries themselves. The third difficulty (Chapter 22) relates to human users: their dislike of and lack of interest in technology, and the 'wicked problem' they present for developers of international digital libraries.

The four appendices provide extensive additional information. Appendix A gives details of French libraries online (Minitel Kiosk libraries, Minitel V23 direct-dial, and Telnet). Appendix B presents information on various electronic conferences, an upcoming feature of digital libraries. Appendices C and D provide, respectively, details of some useful sources of statistical information relating to the Internet, and an analysis of the meaning of the term 'digital library'.

The book is written in a clear, easy-to-read style. It contains numerous good-quality screen dumps of Netscape Web pages that have been taken from the many different digital libraries described in the book. Of course, as one might expect in a treatise of this sort, there are lots of URLs that can be used to follow up the material described.

Undoubtedly, then, this monograph makes an extremely useful contribution to its field. In my view, for anyone who is interested in digital libraries and/or their use as an educational resource, it will be essential reading.

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