

Book Reviews

Margaret Rohdy, Editor

Outsourcing Library Technical Services Operations: Practices in Academic, Public, and Special Libraries. Editors: Karen A. Wilson and Marylou Colver. Chicago: American Library Association, 1997. 239p. \$38 (ISBN 0-8389-0703-2).

This fine book fills a major gap in current library literature. Most of the existing books on technical services outsourcing take the form of manuals or checklists. These books, very useful for their task, discuss the "how" rather than the "why"; it is beyond their scope to analyze the impact of outsourcing in the library or on the profession. While the authors of a bewildering array of journal articles have discussed the reasons and impact of technical services outsourcing from every angle and on every tone of the emotional scale, no other book has attempted to summarize and augment this research. This book, then, would represent a useful contribution to library literature even if it were not particularly well written. Since it is, in fact, a well-written and superbly edited piece, its contribution to the literature is considerable.

The bulk of the literature on technical services outsourcing falls into three categories. Many authors address the philosophy of outsourcing, raising issues about current practice and the good or bad changes that outsourcing can bring. In these articles, authors are often passionate and personal in tone, asking questions but providing few answers. Other items are reports of outsourcing projects in which the authors have participated. These reports have had an enormous influence on the profession because they ground the outsourcing debate in reality. However, the reader may find it difficult

to piece together a balanced picture of outsourcing from these studies alone because the most controversial outsourcing projects are most commonly presented in the literature, and very routine or small projects rarely appear. In the third category of items, authors give advice to potential outsourcers. Some of these are excellent, but they are limited in scope and are most useful to the librarian who is already involved in the outsourcing process. Thus, putting together a broad, objective, practical view of technical services outsourcing has been nearly impossible without reading the majority of the available literature and weighing each item on its objectivity and applicability to the global view. While the literature is rewarding to read, the process is an exhausting one, and many librarians have been unable to invest the time.

In this situation, *Outsourcing Technical Services Operations* provides welcome relief. It presents 16 case studies, of which 11 come from academic libraries, 3 from public libraries, and 2 from special libraries. The outsourcing options presented in the studies range across technical services functions from authority work, database maintenance, and original and copy cataloging to book selection, document delivery, and table of contents services. Outsourcing arrangements vary from total outsourcing of cataloging all the way to the two chapters on "insourcing," or the process of awarding work to one's own employees. In several studies, authors discuss outsourcing specialized tasks, such as cataloging audiovisual material, electronic journals, or government documents. Many different reasons to outsource appear in the book, from time or staffing constraints to budget issues or

lack of expertise. Some outsourcing projects occur in an austere climate of retrenchment; others are a luxury, an opportunity to enhance the quality of the catalog or complete the processing of a backlog. The case studies in this book provide something for everyone, and the collection of all these varied projects in one book provides a nicely balanced view of the current situation of outsourcing.

This book is a welcome alternative to wholesale digestion of the fragmented outsourcing literature, but it does not exist in a vacuum. On the contrary, it offers the reader a convenient tool for further research. A 26-page "Selected Annotated Bibliography" by Marylou Colver follows the case studies. In this bibliography, the outsourcing literature is divided into eight major categories, including three categories devoted to case study literature. The case study literature is divided further, grouping articles on well-publicized outsourcing projects by the name of the library or institution. This bibliography is up-to-date: 10 of the 15 entries on outsourcing at the Hawaii State Public Library System are 1997 citations. The annotations, which are generous paragraphs, greatly enhance the value of the bibliography.

In addition to the bibliography, the book has several useful features. Each case study begins with an abstract so that readers can locate those most pertinent to their interests. Subheadings within the chapters clearly label the different aspects of the projects, again aiding foragers to find the right data quickly. A handy index rounds out the volume. Although each case study has its own authors, the whole book reads very evenly. The writing is consistent and maintains objectivity throughout, a tribute to the thorough and painstaking editors. This book, in short, meets the needs of both the researcher who will thumb through quickly for some ready data and the one who will read it cover to cover. It is a fine work, and one that deserves serious attention from every librarian interested in outsourcing issues.—Clare B. Dunkle, *Monographs Cataloger, Coates Library, Trinity Uni-*

versity, San Antonio, Texas (cdunkle@trinity.edu)

From Print to Electronic: The Transformation of Scientific Communication. Susan Y. Crawford, Julie M. Hurd, and Ann C. Weller. Medford, N.J.: Published for the American Society for Information Science by Information Today, 1996. 117p. \$39.50 (ISBN 1-57387-030-7).

The stated purpose of this monograph is "to provide an overview and examine ... against existing models" (p. 3) the changes in scientific communication brought about by the growth of science since World War II and the rapid development of new technologies for information management and exchange. The book consists of a foreword by Belver Griffith, two introductory chapters on the growth of science and on models of scientific communication, three case studies, and a concluding discussion of future directions.

Chapter 1, "Scientific Communication and the Growth of Big Science" by Susan Y. Crawford, is a clear, concise history of the rise of research in science and technology as a central factor in modern economic growth. Chapter 2, "Models of Scientific Communications Systems" by Julie M. Hurd, begins with a brief discussion of the Garvey/Griffith model of scientific communication, providing a useful background for the case studies and predictions that follow. Hurd distinguishes between modernization and transformation of the communications process.

"Modernization is defined as the use of new technology to continue doing the same thing, but presumably in a more cost-effective and/or efficient way. Transformation is the use of a new technology to change processes in a fundamental way" (p. 14). Hurd examines the steps in the Garvey/Griffith model informal communication, meetings and conferences, and peer review and publication, noting how each has changed since the 1960s when the model was first proposed. Hurd then proposes four new models of scientific communication: "A Modernized Garvey/Griffith Model," "The No-Journal Model," "The Unvetted Model," and "The