

BOOK REVIEWS

Do we need this book?

PRECIS: a Primer by Mary Dykstra. London: British Library, 1985. 263p. £9.50. ISBN 0 123 1022 3

Mary Dykstra assisted in the preparation of the second edition of the PRECIS Manual which was reviewed in *InCite* in November 1984. The Primer reviewed here was developed in conjunction with the Manual and was, indeed, foreshadowed in its foreword. The two works are intended to be complementary. The Manual provides a detailed exposition of PRECIS, having as its intended audience practising indexers and teachers; the Primer is intended as an introduction to the system, having as its intended audience students, information specialists and beginning indexers.

The Primer follows the pattern of the Manual very closely, especially in its early chapters. This is both a strength and a weakness. On the credit side it certainly facilitates reference from the Primer to the Manual on points requiring further elucidation. However, the order in which concepts are presented in the Manual is not necessarily the order in which they are best presented in the classroom. One has to proceed to Chapter 7, on page 109 (of a primer!), before one reaches a chapter completion of which enables one to write even a simple string and produce a set of entries.

This is partly a problem of sequence but partly also one of content. Notwithstanding its title the Primer comprises 238 pages of text to the 306 in the Manual, appendices excluded in both cases. Whilst the common pattern of the two works facilitates cross-reference the fact that the Primer is quite detailed and, on many issues, the Manual provides little additional information. The discussion in the respective works of levels of differences is a case in point: even the examples are the same.

Many of the examples in the Primer are the same as those in the Manual, though some are different. It is not clear why different examples are preferred in some cases but not others. In at least one case the example in the Manual is decidedly better. In the Primer the example used to illustrate the (NU) convention term required when the string is read downwards but not when it is read upwards,

(1) comets (NU)

(q) Halley's comet

However, since the term tagged (NU) is the first term in the string, and therefore never appears in the display, the example does not illustrate the convention very adequately and, in particular, does not illustrate the difference between (NU) and the (LO) convention discussed in the immediately preceding section. The example in the Manual is clearly better:

(1) man

(p) eyes (NU)

(2) glaucoma

In general, however, the explanations are clear and the examples apposite. There is also good index modelling on that in the Manual. One reservation is whether we need this work as well as the Manual. Probably we do not. We do, however, need a more concise primer incorporating the changes which have occurred in PRECIS during the last few years.

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The children cannot wait

Library Work for Children and Young Adults in the Developing Countries: Proceedings of the IFLA/UNESCO Pre-Session Seminar in Leipzig, GDR, 10-15 August, 1981, eds. Geneviève Patte and Sigrun Hara Hannerdottir. München: K.G. Saur, 1984, 284pp. ISBN 3-598-20389-6.

This is a selection of papers given at the IFLA/UNESCO Seminar for Children and Young Adults. The emphasis of the seminar, and hence the papers, was 'small libraries for small people' and the papers were all written by participants from developing countries rather than by 'experts' from the developed world. Each day of the seminar dealt with a different theme and the book is divided into four sections with papers on the following themes: the role and function of library services for children in the development of rural and urban communities, the place of children's services in national networks, children's libraries and the promotion of local literature and publishing and the education and training of children's librarians.

Each section contains a brief abstract of the articles and the discussion sections in both French and English with the papers and discussion comments presented in the language used by the participant at the conference. The quality of the papers varies, many being descriptions of successful or unsuccessful programs in the author's own country, while others deal with more universal topics such as 'Libraries in the Context of Development'.

A number of issues are raised that library planners in developing countries have tended to ignore. Most developing countries put most of their library resources into national and academic libraries ignoring public and school library services, yet it is the young people who form the majority of the population in developing countries and the most literate section of the population who have the least access to library services.

I'm not sure if the discussion sections are actual records of the entire discussion or just selected portions of the discussion. These portions seem to be recorded in the order that they were spoken and jump from topic to topic as many speakers want to talk about their 'pet projects'. This section could use some introductory comments and concluding remarks by the editors.

Because of the scarcity of information about school and public library services in developing countries, those individuals involved in education or library projects in these countries will find this a useful and interesting publication, as will students of comparative librarianship. The book concludes with a number of recommendations to IFLA and UNESCO, some of which have been acted on by these organisations. The main value of the book is its contribution to librarians in developing countries and the fact that it is people from these countries exchanging ideas with each other.

This contribution is best summed up by the statement made by a Sri Lankan community development worker, Fusun Salgado, 'Let us learn from each other's experiences and start on small libraries for small people. The sophistication of library science can wait, the children cannot.'

Joe Hallein,

Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education

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Practical PR for school library media centres / Marian S. Edsall. New York: Neal-Schumann, 1984. 165p. \$17.95. ISBN 0 918212 77 4

At first glance the contents of this book, with sections on identifying targets within and outside the organisation, how to get media coverage, and printing your own brochures and publicity material, seem very similar to many other books on public relations. However, because the material is placed firmly in a school library context it strikes familiar chords.

The aims of public relations programs would be accepted as an important facet of school library administration. However, although school librarians are very aware of the need to promote library services to students and teaching staff, and readily employ tools of public relations, such as displays, bookmarks and thematic booklists, they seldom develop a total program approach.

Thus, this book starts with the beginning of a PR program — analysis of the PR needs of a school library and then the formulation of objectives for the program. The chapters that follow contain examples and ideas for incorporation in school library PR programs that have been gathered from many sources. All of these are practical ideas — someone, somewhere has used each of them successfully.

The chapters titled 'Promoting the library media centre to faculty, administration and the school board' and 'School — public library co-operation' I found particularly relevant to the current Australian situation with the need to have school decision-makers aware of the role of the school library and the place of the school library in the library/information network of local communities.

This is the kind of book that could be dis-

missed as not presenting anything new. However, as the author states, 'very little is new under the sun of school library promotion'. It can be said however, that this book contains so many good ideas that many would be seen as new and ingenious by most readers. Also, the emphasis upon the developing of total PR programs, rather than presenting a collection of good ideas, makes this book more useful. If an idea is new for you, fits your circumstances and objectives, you will have justified the time spent on reading this enthusiastically presented material. A useful bibliography and index is also included.

Ros Conroy
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Conflicts in reference services edited by Bill Katz and Ruth A. Fraley. New York: Haworth Press, 1985. 236 pp. US\$22.95. ISBN 0-86656-385-7.

There have been many titles using the words, 'issues' or 'problems', and here there is use of the more highly charged word 'conflict'. Apart from brief discussion in the introduction, of the role of conflict: 'Is conflict something to be avoided or is it interwoven in the professional life of librarians? . . .' the matter is settled in favour of the latter for the purposes of this book. Conflict as a disruptive element is dismissed in preference for the view that a library without some conflict ' . . . is either dead or doomed and probably not fulfilling its mission'. This reviewer's standpoint is not to shirk conflict but if reference work is fraught with conflict, service would be impeded. Upon examining these contributions I think 'issues' and 'problems' are just as appropriate words to choose; 'conflict' signifies greater discord than is evident here.

There are 21 articles in this collection dealing with a diverse range of matters of contemporary reference work. The fees issue prominent in recent years, is dealt with three articles. Conflict is found to exist between reference and other sections of the library, with one paper on inter-loans and another on cataloguing. There is internal personal conflict over the level of service, with librarians trying to reconcile the discrepancy between the philosophy of reference service and the limitations imposed in day to day work. This is also the theme of the paper 'Why didn't they teach us that? The credibility gap in library education'. Conflicts involving library clientele directly are limited to the academic library setting, the question of bibliographic instruction and conflict with faculty.

With so many sources of conflict identified and described it is heartening to see that a number of the papers provide suggestions for mitigating or eliminating conflict. Fred Batt article is devoted to decreasing conflict and improving the quality of reference service and Benson and Butler spend half their paper on solutions.

Whatever your view on conflict as a disruptive or stimulating element in reference work this collection has something of interest. Amongst a number of possible quotes in Donald Davinson's article the following haunts the librarian:

The biggest conflict of all in our work is that were we to have a user population all of whom demanded of us the sort of service we tell each other we can supply, then we should not be able to do so.

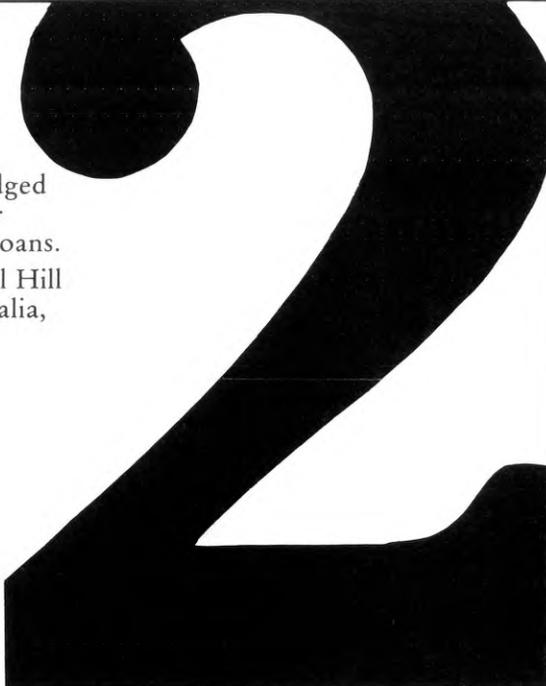
Denis Abbo
CSIRO Marine Laboratory

Urban Public Library Service for the Aging in Canada / Lois M Bewley and Sylvia Crooks. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Dalhousie University Libraries and Dalhousie University School of Library Service, 1984. 125pp. ISBN 0-7703-0181-9 (Occasional Papers Series ISSN 0318-7403, No 34)

In order to determine the status of library service to the aging in Canada and to provide a basis upon which to assess that service, Bewley undertook a survey in 1982 of 30 of the 3 large urban public libraries, followed up in 1983 by interviews of senior librarians from six of the responding libraries. The impetus for the study arose from the growing concern of many public librarians in Canada about the increasing number of Canadians who have reached retirement age and older, and with the concomitant lack of public library response to this increase. The authors hope that the results of their study would aid public librarians in planning and developing programmes and resources appropriate to the interests of the older citizens in their communities.

The libraries surveyed stated they would develop and expand services for the aging if funds were available, by providing 'coping information', 'improved access', 'advisory' or 'counselling service', 'transportation to the library', 'staff time to work more closely with senior citizens organizations', and 'more PR'. Bewley and Crooks, however, ask if a lack of money can still be considered a valid reason for the non-existence or non-expansion of an important, essential public service if demographic statistics on the aging are to be believed. The same question could be asked of Australian public libraries.

The authors conclude that if library service to the aging is to receive the attention it requires now, and will require in the future, it must be established and maintained by finan-



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resources committed to this service as a priority. The problem facing public libraries centres not only on how much money can be spent on what, but why it is spent that way, and whether it should continue to be so spent. The report offers many practical recommendations to help public librarians improve their library and information services to the aging and these have equal validity in the Australian context; eg, that each library energetically pursue the denial of the stereotype of increasing aging/staff contact through regular seniors days, and by inviting the aging to participate directly in specific library activities; by encouraging staff attendance at seminars on gerontology; by investigating of which needs other than those legislated for library purposes might be acquired; by identifying the most appropriate government and non-government agencies/organisations working with and for the elderly and determining how best the library might/could coordinate, develop and maintain with such agencies referral, information, resource and program/activity services etc.

The value of this report for Australian public librarians is twofold. First, the Canadian socio-economic and demographic profile is similar to ours (9.7% of the Canadian population is aged 65 and over as compared with 5% in Australia). Thus much of what is said can be used as a guide here in Australia. Second, the authors have produced a cogent and readable literature review on the aging. Popular myths surrounding the stereotyped elderly are exploded, theories of social gerontology are explained and interests, activities and leisure patterns of the aging are outlined. In short, this is a quick and painless way of coming to grips with the key facts and issues associated with this age group. Should more information be required, the authors have provided an extensive bibliography. Furthermore, the questionnaire used in the survey has been included and could be used as a model in undertaking a similar survey here. Essential reading for any public librarian who is seriously interested in improving library and information provision to the aging.

Angela Bridgland
Melbourne CAE

Recommended if planning library move

Library space planning/Ruth A Fraley and Carol Lee. Anderson, New York: Neal-Schuman, 1985. 158pp. US\$35.00. ISBN 018212 44 8.

At a first glance I was a degree sceptical about this book, however a more thorough examination changed my mind and I would now recommend it for anybody planning a library move.

At the outset the authors suggest three reasons for considering a spatial reorganisation of libraries: lack of collection growth space; lack of space for people; and a change in direction or mission of the organisation or community served by the library. The book is intended to offer a systematic and practical guide to the replanning of library space use, particularly within existing and extended or modelled buildings.

The first four chapters offer advice on measuring existing collections, on alternative shelving possibilities, particularly in non-owning or stack areas, and an assessment of building areas, facilities and functions which will be the basis for any re-arrangement. The other chapter gives a superficial comment on the financial aspects of space planning and is best considered as a check-list rather than a detailed costing guide.

For most readers the last four chapters dealing with the planning and execution of a move, particularly of the collection, will be of most use. Considerable detail is given on publicity and communication of the move, on the planning and organisation of the move, and on the maintenance of existing services whilst the changes are underway.

The text is supported by a draft text for tender documents should a commercial moving contractor be considered, by a selected bibliography (72 items) and an index.

Warwick Dunstan
State Library of Tasmania

Rewarding reading for anyone going on study leave

Industrial use of information in Great Britain, Sweden and the United States of America: a study leave report. Bryan A. Kelman. Perth: the Library, Western Australian Institute of Technology, 1985. 107pp. \$9.00. ISBN 0 908 155 573.

Of interest to many of us is the information gathered by people on study leave programmes and Bryan Kelman, by publication of this report of a study leave undertaken in 1983, makes that information widely available.

Six objectives set out the purpose of the study leave programme. They focus on the use of information by industry and the information services offered to industry by suppliers. The scope is very broad and coupled with the fact that four countries were visited in three months the task set was more than a little daunting. Zeal and hard work did however lead to 45 contacts being made with industrial firms, though some interviews were conducted by telephone.

It must have been difficult to decide how to print the material collected. To treat each objective separately would inevitably have resulted in unevenness. The author has opted for a brief introduction providing background to the programme, a detailed description of visits made to industrial establishments and information suppliers and finally a brief overview. The main body of the report follows the sequence of the authors' travels from Singapore to Great Britain, Sweden and the United States of America.

Findings of this study leave programme support previous work in this field, Kelman says. 'Somewhat surprising was the number of firms contacted who expressed a lack of need for information in running their firms'. This view has frequently been heard by investigators of industry's information needs and while some firms are unaware of their information needs others sometimes interpret 'information' differently. Other observations which support findings in the literature include the use of personal contacts with outside experts and the recruitment of staff who bring information new to the firm.

From this overseas study it could be deduced that the effect of the development of a Technology Park on the edge of WAIT's campus will probably lead to use of WAIT's library and information services by industry staff who are graduates of WAIT but overall it could be expected that requests by industry for information from the library will represent only a very small proportion of the library's total activity.

This report would be rewarding reading for anyone contemplating an overseas study leave programme. It gives an idea of the enthusiasm required to plan a programme, carry out the objectives, and finally to write and publish a report so that others can benefit from the experience.

Robin Kench
Insearch Ltd Dialog

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