

# Electronic sources of information

**E**lectronic sources of information for business in Australia and New Zealand is a welcome book for anyone working in the field of business information.

This directory describes itself as 'a guide to commercially available electronic services in Australia and New Zealand' and indeed it appears to be the only directory of its kind listing sources specifically for business information on Australia and

New Zealand.

Of its very nature, a book of this kind becomes quickly out-of-date due to the constant changes in the world of electronic information. The authors alert us to this possibility in the preface, noting that to the best of their knowledge the information was correct as of September 1994. From my own everyday working experience of the databases listed and described in this book, most of the

information still holds. It would be useful to see this book as a regular, perhaps annual, publication, as it is an excellent desk tool and pocket reference guide.

The book is neatly divided into sections covering sources for information under various headings, including management/industrial relations, industry, company, finance and accounting, law and legislation, statistical/numerical/economic, and directories.

Each entry contains information on the database's availability in terms of hosts, cost (online services costs vary considerably from file to file), medium (whether online, CD-ROM or other), update frequency, coverage, country of origin, publisher, whether full-text, bibliographic or with abstracts, where indexed, and a brief description of database contents.

The introductory section serves as a useful guide for those not already familiar with the vast array of choices currently available in the area of electronic sources of information. There is an excellent list of references provided for further reading.

Just one quibble — it would be very useful to have publishers' addresses provided within the individual database entries, rather than in a separate section at the end. I find this a problem with all the database directories I have come across so far. It can be laborious to have to constantly flick back and forth between the sections to find addresses. Other than that one criticism, I heartily recommend this publication!

Stewart, Janet M. and Oxley, Sandra, *Electronic sources of information for business in Australia and New Zealand*. 2nd edition. Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne, 1994. 194pp. A\$32.00 plus postage paperback. ISBN 0-86444-2548.

Sinead Williams

## Australian suburbia

**M**etropolis now examines Australian suburbia from a variety of perspectives. It invites us to rethink our views of what constitutes urban life and how we might challenge the restrictive hierarchies that have influenced our approaches to living in Australian cities.

Formatted into two parts, *Metropolis now* poses many new questions for planners and policy makers. Part one contains a collection of essays which challenge many of the ways in which contemporary urban discourse places the suburbs of Australian cities, women, non-English speaking residents and Aboriginal histories in positions of subordination or 'otherness' experienced by minority groups. The authors look at the relevance of cultural policy, the Olympics, environmental issues, increased surveillance, multiculturalism, infrastructure and gender for planning cities of the future. It also examines crime and defensible space in contemporary cities, cultural continuity, 'user pays' issues and the 'green' dreams of urban planning.

The main theme running through the monograph is that Australian society has experienced ongoing change and we must plan our cities accordingly. As the population within

cities diversifies, both in household and ethnic composition, and new issues such as cultural practices and the environment become manifest in the urban political agenda, different ways of thinking about cities and planning become urgent concerns. Part two highlights these issues in a number of practical contexts.

The authors provide a provocative insight for academics, practitioners and students of planning, geography, sociology, cultural studies, women's studies, communication studies, architecture and political economy. Social research provides background to the arguments presented. There are useful notes which direct the reader to further references at the end of each chapter. In different ways each of the essays chosen by the editors provides a challenge to planners and policy makers to think laterally and be flexible in their planning. Drawing on new ideas across a range of disciplines, the authors have persuasively attempted to shift the boundaries of planning theories and practices.

*Metropolis now*, Gibson, Katherine and Watson, Sophie, eds. Australia: Pluto Press, 1994. 250pp. A\$24.95 paperback. ISBN 1 86403 014 3.

Andrea Brook