Book Review

Serials Management in Academic Libraries: A Guide to Issues and Practices, by Jean Walter Farrington. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997. 192 p. $59.95. ISBN 0-313-27378-2. (The Greenwood Library Management Collection series).

Farrington has attempted to provide a text, directed towards practicing serials librarians, which "deals with the principal areas of serials management in an academic setting and highlights some of the key issues of the time" (p. ix). The main focus is on automation and technology, and the effect these have had on serials and serials management. Although advertised by the publisher as offering practical solutions, the work, instead, does as the subtitle suggests and outlines issues and practices. It provides a general overview of certain aspects of the serials field and offers a few opinions about what is best for academic libraries of various sizes. Currency of the information ranges from 1993 in some chapters to 1996 in the chapters devoted exclusively to technology.

The book begins with a lengthy chapter on serials automation that details the relevant issues, questions, and concerns, as well as the future direction, of the field. Farrington discusses all of the functional requirements of a system, including checklists of questions which should be answered prior to system selection and a few ideas about what is needed by larger and smaller libraries. A second technology-devoted chapter, entitled the "Electronic Explosion," covers electronic publishing from the earliest years through the World Wide Web, including a fair amount of history and the current (1996) state of the art. These two chapters are, for the most part, well organized, detailed, and well written.

From the table of contents, it seems clear what the remainder of the book will focus on. What one finds when reading the text, however, is often something quite different. For instance, Chapter 6, "Acquiring Serials in Paper," includes everything from the definition of a serial (the only place where the word is defined) to the organization of serials units (which also has its own chapter); useful resources for serials acquisitions; issues related to vendors, orders, claims, and billing; the various types of serial orders; and cancellations. Although two other chapters are devoted to serials in other formats, they do not contain the information found here which is, in reality, useful and relevant for serials in *all* formats.

In the chapter entitled "Management of Serials Information in a Changing Environment," Farrington spends a lot of time discussing the *use* of serials, both historically and in today's academic world, before outlining a few of the standard serials management issues. Chapter 7, which defines its focus as newspapers, depository publications, and computer files, includes a separate section on microforms, plus a discussion of small press publications which is buried under the heading of "Government Publications." In contrast, the chapters on organization and staffing of serials operations, journal use studies, and serials cataloging remain generally within these stated topics.

Organizational and editing problems abound, with many useful discussions found where one would least expect them. For example, a section in Chapter 1 devoted to order and fund records includes also a discussion of check-in records. A section devoted to the use of serials by graduate students and faculty also includes lengthy discussion about uses by

undergraduates. Reasons for increases in subscription prices are included in the discussion of new journal orders. Numerous examples of this type are found in almost every chapter. In addition, headings and subheadings are often in the wrong type of print, causing confusion as to where exactly the section is meant to fall in relation to others around it.

Librarians wishing to read about current issues in academic serials management may find this volume useful as it provides a good general overview of some of these topics and a lot of useful information; however, it cannot be considered a reference work, with immediate topical access available through the table of contents or index. It must instead be read from cover to cover. The chapters devoted to technology would make useful additions to a class text, but organizational problems throughout the work make it difficult to recommend the whole of it for this purpose. Those looking for a comprehensive coverage of the topic will be better served by Marcia Tuttle's *Managing Serials* (JAI Press, 1996). —**Mary Grenci, Serials Catalog Librarian, Knight Library, 1299 University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-1299 <mgrenci@darkwing.uoregon.edu>**