This book offers a fresh, new look at information, and this approach opens the door to focus on the contemporary debate on information philosophy and the political economy of information. The book is divided into four segments (which the author refers to as an information circuit) namely, the representation of information, its production, regulation, and the consumption of information. As the author puts it, 'The articulation between these elements of the information circuit allows the convergence of conceptual and material dimensions that typify the difficulties of information discourse. In other words, the bipolar or twofold nature of information requires a simultaneous recognition of its "softer" meaning-related side and its "harder" physical attributes. The information circuit also opens up for discussion the idea of information industries and their economic and social roles, as well as the idea of information's role in philosophical and political contexts' (p.151).

Under the philosophy of information, the author covers the following themes:
• representation of information, where a hermeneutical and sociological approach is followed,
• knowledge, which is defined from an epistemological perspective,
• ethical dilemmas pertaining to the use of information,
• the sociological aspects of information, which cover themes such as globalisation, informatisation and post-modernity.

The producing of information covers a variety of socio-political issues pertaining to the production and distribution of information. Specific attention is given to the political economy of information production in South Africa. Other relevant topics include: ownership of information, the global information economy and the mapping of information industries. The South African information industries are specifically mentioned.

The section dealing with the regulation and deregulation of information distribution focuses on information policy issues at the national and international levels. Specific attention is given to the role of the state and free market mechanisms that can influence the regulation of information flow. Information policy issues in South Africa are also addressed.

The book ends with a conclusion where the main themes are summarised and the aim of the book is explained again.

In summary, the book is a timely publication in South Africa. It is well written and is a suitable text for those scholars who are interested in the contemporary debate on the political economy of information in South Africa. However, one has to bear in mind that this book is only an introduction to these themes and thus does not cover them in great detail. Another disadvantage is the fact that most of the sources used are older than 1999.

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E-Serials: Publishers, libraries, users and standards

This second edition retains most of the original chapters of the first, which was published in 1998; but the information has been brought up to date and new topics introduced. The editor acknowledges that there are bound to be gaps in the subject coverage, but to cover absolutely everything about electronic serials would produce a volume the size of a 'James Michener novel'.
The book comprises 18 chapters which are grouped into a number of sections giving the reader a look at electronic serials from various points of view: publishing (2); pricing (1); acquisitions and collection development (4); cataloguing and metadata (3); preservation and archiving (1); projects and innovations (4); indexing (1); Uniform Resource Identifiers (1); and citation (1). Each has a different author – mainly librarians from academic institutions, or publishers. Most of the authors have addresses in the USA. Each chapter has its own bibliography, and the book is indexed.

A highlight of this book was the chapters in the section entitled “Acquisitions and Collection Development”. Writing that it is “...an interesting time in which to be buying library materials” Ellen Finnie Duranceau (Digital Resources Acquisitions Librarian, MIT Libraries) sets the tone for a stimulating discussion in the first paragraph of her chapter, An eclipse of the sun: Acquisitions in the digital era where she lists some of the challenges facing acquisitions staff. “The issues acquisitions librarians face, the work they do, and the skills required to do it – all have shifted focus. We work in an environment with pricing models that require teams to analyze them, licenses that require legal expertise to evaluate and negotiate, and products whose massive, fluctuating content challenges our ability to provide information about what is being purchased and appropriate, accurate access from our catalogs. We work in an environment in which the very definitions of ‘serial’ and ‘monograph’ have become outdated at best, arbitrary at worst; an environment in which assumptions must be challenged and challenged again.” The “sun” in Duranceau’s title are the twin suns of the catalogue and traditional collection development methods. These, she maintains, are being realigned into new orbits around a new centre that has yet to be properly defined.

Using work flow diagrams to illustrate the acquisitions processes as followed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Libraries, the author demonstrates that electronic serials cannot be treated exactly as their print counterparts. For electronic serials, the process is not linear and involves teams of staff instead of the individual at each step of the process for print serials. Because of the high costs involved in purchasing access to most electronic resources, the NERD Group (Networked Electronic Resources Discussion) at MIT Libraries compiled a decision matrix in order to rank the various criteria for purchase. The eleven ranked criteria that emerged from this exercise provide an essential tool to objectively assess resources. Once NERD has decided to purchase a resource, the digital resources librarian obtains a copy of the license and starts negotiating a price. Licenses are reviewed by another team. Communication is also required with the Information Systemsoffice to discuss access methods. After a trial period and when negotiations are concluded, NERD will make the final purchase decision.

A section in this chapter deals with licensing issues - a topic that strikes fear into most librarians. Many standard licenses are now freely available for use, along with general licensing principles. The chapter points out key licensing issues which all purchasers must consider: who, how, where and what – “the definition of the user population, how the product can be used, where the product can be used, and what is being purchased.”

In a chapter entitled Collection Development for Online Serials Redux: Now who needs to do what, why and when, Mark Jacobs and Cindy Stewart Kaag (both librarians at Washington State University) provide several pages of guidelines for selecting, processing and accessing electronic resources. Although it is important to set up a process for dealing with electronic serials, it is equally important to remember that things can change very quickly, and that once the process is in place it may need to be adapted. They caution that the addition of electronic serials to a library collection can be overwhelming for library staff and users. The newness of the approach and the changes involved may be intimidating. It is important to try to prevent panic by instilling the realisation in everyone that, basically, the library’s purpose remains unchanged; it is just that the method in which the material is sent to the user that is different.

In the last chapter in this section, Kristin H. Gerhard (Electronic Resources Coordinator and Catalogue Librarian at Iowa State University) focuses on the model for electronic resources management as adopted by Iowa State University. Electronic resource management crosses departmental and divisional lines, and Iowa State therefore created the position of coordinator. This post is located within the Acquisitions Department, in technical services. The advantages to this approach are: (i) The coordinator acts as a funnel and collection point for information from all sources; (ii) It is important to have a single contact person to whom staff can bring complex questions, issues and concerns; (iii) The coordinator is responsible for the flow of information regarding electronic resources across departmental and divisional lines. There are also potential pitfalls: (a) There is no single person to provide backup to the electronic resources coordinator; (b) The position requires constant communication among a wide variety of people.

Steven C. Shadle (Serials Cataloguer, University of Washington Libraries) and Jim Cole (Principal Serials Cataloguer, Iowa State University Library) each write a chapter on the problems of applying the standards (AACR2 and ISBD), that worked well in the print monograph world, to the electronic environment.

Within the other sections of the book there are chapters devoted to the development of ScienceDirect, Serials Solutions, D-Lib Magazine, and D Space.

For anyone working with electronic resources, this is a wonderful book full of thought-provoking writings.

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The publication of this book is a significant contribution to the field of Library and Information Research, largely because of the lack of relevant textbooks on this subject at the tertiary level. The book consists of contributions from well-known LIS researchers in Africa, six of whom are based at the University of Botswana. All nine chapters are well-written, clearly setting out basic LIS research concepts, though with examples that have an African flavour.

The first chapter, Introduction to research, is by Lenrie Aina. It describes concepts basic to research, such as terminology, characteristics, typology, and the research process. Specific aspects covered are setting out the research problem, identifying the objective(s) of the research, posing the research question and formulating a hypothesis in order to find a solution to the research problem. It also discusses how to undertake a literature review, how to set the research methodology and how to report on the results of the research, aspects that are fundamental for LIS students at the introductory stage of research in tertiary education. The illustrations used in the chapter makes the presentation highly comprehensible and readable.

The next chapter, Research methodologies in informationscience, is by Aina together with Ajiferuke, who is a senior lecturer in Information and Media Studies at the University of Western Ontario, Canada. This chapter is an extension of the overview of the research methodologies given in Chapter One. Research design, methods, instruments, sampling, etc commonly used in LIS research, are discussed clearly and precisely. In Chapter Three, the late Richard Onyango looks at Data collection instruments in informationscience in his inimitable way. He examines the main LIS research instruments, such as questionnaires, interviews, observation and documentary sources, and concludes by considering on the problems of data collection instruments with reference to the African situation.

Chapter Four by B.C. Serema and Patricia Mooko focuses on the critical component, namely Information resources in Library and Information Science research.

The use of archival sources for research is not common in LIS research. In Chapter Five, Nathan Mnjama discusses Using archival sources for research in Africa by providing an account of the state of archival development in Africa; highlighting the nature of archival sources, the value of archives, methods of archival arrangement, retrieval, and problems of using archival materials in Africa. This chapter is particularly relevant for the African situation.

Chapter Six on Use of statistics in Library and Information Science research by I.S.Y. Ajiferuke examines a component of LIS research that is rarely understood by beginning researchers, and even some senior LIS researchers. He highlights the main aspects of descriptive and inferential statistics applicable in LIS research, in a style that will be easily understood by students at all levels.

Computers continue to support research in numerous ways, particularly in the processing, analysis and retrieval of research information. In Chapter Seven, Kgomotso Moahi makes a unique presentation of Computer applications in Library and Information Science research including a rich description of electronic and digital sources, as well as virtual libraries and web-based searching facilities (i.e. search tools and search engines) and methods.

Chapter Eight, General issues in research by Aina offers a blend of useful information that a researcher should consider carefully when reporting research.

The final chapter discusses Writing a Research Proposal in the Information Sciences. Amos Thapisa provides helpful points on the essentials to be included in the research proposal. A research proposal is of course fundamental to every research activity.

It is important to note that Research in Information Sciences. An African Perspective is couched as a textbook for LIS research beginners. Each chapter in the book ends with helpful review questions for self-learning and self-assessment. Although the list of references provided at the end of each chapter will not necessarily be new or current to all readers, some references will be useful for LIS researchers to pursue so as to supplement and extend what is covered by this book. Since research concepts, processes and practices are pretty much universal, those who expect a consistently African orientation are likely to be disappointed. Roughly 70% of the content reflects widely known information. Nevertheless, an African perspective is given attention in a few chapters. On the whole, the information provided in the