

Librarianship and information work worldwide 1988

Line, Maurice general ed.

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This is a truly remarkable publication. As the present century, and coincidentally the millennium, draw to a close, the librarianship and information professions are changing rapidly and developing with incredible momentum. To keep abreast of this scenario, and across the world's stage, is no mean feat. Maurice Line, a landmark figure in the annals of librarianship, assisted by Graham Mackenzie, Paul Sturges and twelve distinguished contributors have succeeded admirably in their goal of harnessing and reporting on a wide range of world-wide developments. It is interesting to note that South Africa's John Willemse is a member of the prestigious Editorial Advisory Board.

The volume for 1998, the seventeenth in this important annual series, provides a comprehensive overview of developments in the library and information world. Each volume contains several regular chapters covering the previous year (in this instance 1997) in national, public, academic and special librarianship, followed by chapters on other topics such as bibliographic control, collections and management which appear biennially or triennially, with appropriate period coverage. The present volume covers Health Services Information and Research and Consultancy for the first time.

There are copious references to World Wide Web material in the present volume, a trend which is continually on the increase. However, it is apparent that adequate screening of Web material is a problem for the editors, who concede that material discovered by authors is likely to result in a better random selection.

With overseas travel becoming increasingly out-of-reach for librarians and information workers because of crippling currency factors, volumes such as the present series are all the more important and most useful in assisting South African librarians to keep abreast of significant overseas developments.

A feature of all the surveys in these volumes is the excellent assemblage of references attached to each article. This is a valuable resource and offers guidance for further reading and research.

The vexing problem of price does arise, and immediately becomes a deterrent to acquisition by librarians confronted by dwindling budgets. Whether a library can afford to spend R700 on a volume which profiles just one year at a time, is of course problematical.

However, there is no doubt that the series does succeed in covering material one would otherwise have to peruse in a wide range of LIS journals. In the end analysis, there is a strong case for the money to be found for the annual volumes, which form a landmark in professional literature meeting a real need, unrivalled in their field and consistently excellent in their concise quality reviews. The series is a tool which is as necessary for continuing education as it is for library schools and wherever librarianship and information work is taught and practised.

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University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.