

## **Book Review**

**Management of Serials in Libraries**, by Thomas E. Nisonger. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1998. 433 p. \$55.00. ISBN 1-56308-213-6.

This volume provides an excellent overview of the field of serials management, with special emphasis placed on what the author terms serials "collection management" (more familiar to this reader as collection development). The work is scholarly and well-researched, extremely interesting, and surprisingly easy to read.

Nisonger begins with a basic introduction to serials, including different definitions that are or have been in use, an introduction to a variety of serial types, and a general discussion of the electronic journal, which is current through the "bibliographic hermaphrodite" discussions of 1996. The author follows with a chapter focusing on the history and statistics related to serials.

The main focus of the work begins with Chapter 3, the first of five chapters devoted exclusively to discussion of serials collection management. Chapter 3 includes an introduction to the topic; explanations of various serials collection management functions; criteria and techniques used for the microevaluation of serials; and, all aspects of budgeting as it relates to serials, including budgeting for document delivery. Chapter 4 covers techniques, criteria and major approaches to the macroevaluation of serials. Chapters 5 through 7 focus more closely on citation analysis as it applies to serials collection management, periodical use studies, and journal ranking studies.

Chapter 8 introduces the reader to all the activities involved in the processing of serials by libraries. In this one, long chapter, Nisonger covers acquisitions activities, cataloging, routing, replacements, binding, duplicates, exchanges, physical housing and arrangement, circulation, vendor selection and evaluation, various ways of organizing serials work, and copyright issues. By necessity of space, and in keeping with the primary focus of the work, each of these is touched on only briefly, with readers referred elsewhere for further study of these important functions and issues.

Chapter 9 covers the electronic journal. Included in this interesting and (for a print monograph) up-to-date chapter are discussions of the history of the Internet and its use in the management of print journals, preprint servers, the impact of electronic journals on the field of serials collection management, issues related to managing and processing electronic journals in libraries, preservation and archiving, policy making, cancellation (of either the print or the electronic version), access vs. ownership, full-text journals and electronic journal collections, and much more. The chapter provides a thorough and useful overview of all issues related to electronic journal publication and the collection and processing of these resources by libraries. Information is current through April 1998.

The final chapter centers on serials automation, including a brief, but interesting, history and discussion of a variety of standards related to the automating of library (and in particular serials) functions. This is followed by an epilogue that discusses the future of serials management and the future of the electronic journal.

Most chapters are arranged in a similar manner. Nisonger introduces the reader to the topic, explains its use and/or importance, defines and explains major concepts, surveys the literature, discusses one or more pertinent examples or studies, and refers readers to useful resources for more in-depth study. Each chapter ends with an unannotated bibliography of suggested readings arranged by sub-topic. Nisonger also provides three annotated appendices: *Sources of Statistical Data on Serials*, *Serials Bibliographies*, and World Wide Web sites pertaining to serials. Each appendix consists of an explanatory introduction followed by citations with descriptive annotations. Verification (in January 1999) of web sites listed in Appendix 3 showed 34 of the 40 sites still working, with 2 others pointing to new pages. The remaining sites are still available and should be easily retrievable through a simple web search. The book closes with an unannotated *General Bibliography*, a lengthy *Author/Title Index* and a very brief *Subject Index*. The *General Bibliography* is a listing, in alphabetical order, of all resources given in the chapter bibliographies. Access is not lost by having only a brief subject index because the table of contents is extremely detailed and points the reader to most subtopics.

Nisonger has definitely done his homework in researching for this text, which is filled with citations, examples, and resources for further study. I did find some minor factual errors, for instance the author's explanation of the difference between the Association of Research Libraries and the Association of College and Research Libraries. In addition, the sheer number of citations and relative lack of evaluative comments on many of these works and studies at times left me wondering what criteria, if any, had been used in deciding which authors to cite and (in so doing) which findings to perpetuate in the literature. Although now perfect, this volume provides an excellent general overview and grounding in the basic concepts and functions related to serials collection management and a teasingly good introduction to other serials activities and topics, as well as offering suggestions for further, more detailed, reading in every subtopic covered. Nisonger has taken the large, sometimes confusing world of serials management and presented it in easily digestible portions that a serials novice can understand and make use of. At the same time, he provides a good deal of information of use to the experienced serialist and introduces readers at all levels to a wealth of resources in the field.

I recommend this book for professionals involved with serials, particularly those with collection development responsibilities, and highly recommend it as a text for a library course with a serious serials collection management component.—**Mary Greci, Serials Catalog Librarian, Knight Library, 1299 University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-1299**  
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