their social and political histories. Pool also speculates about the ways in which telecommunications will free our lives geographically and professionally. Most of the book, however, is devoted to refuting charges that global communications will destroy indigenous cultures, wreak havoc on the economies of the have-not nations, and imperil their security. In the 1970s, these fears led both developing and developed nations to create idiosyncratic standards and rates and to enact a spate of protectionist legislation controlling the importation of both hardware and information. In Pool's view, recent technological developments and social science research have proven all these concerns to be unfounded. The charge of cultural imperialism, he argues, is but a smokescreen for the more real economic fears of the business community and the political insecurity of those in power.

Protectionism in economic and cultural matters betrays an elitist attitude on the part of Third World governments and their American supporters. Pool cites current social science research that suggests that people do not passively absorb information fed to them, but rather reject unsought information not relevant to their lives (witness the birth-control campaign in India). Research also supports the notion that the flow of information may at first be centralized in one area of the world, but then soon becomes diffused to other areas, which then develop their own fields of expertise.

On the economic front, Pool maintains that protectionism can only be self-defeating for developing countries. It is in their interest to adapt the inventions of large, well-capitalized countries for local use and leapfrog into the next stage of development. Pool also argues that global telecommunications no longer pose a threat to national security. The development of minicomputers and intelligent terminals should lay to rest the fears of governments wary of storing important and sensitive information abroad.

In fact, the availability of various means of telecommunications makes it likely that, in the future, businesses and governments will employ a mix of centralized and local data processing. Though data needing large storage facilities and powerful processing may still have to be centralized or processed abroad—bibliographic data, for example—local storage and manipulation of most data have become economically advantageous. It is in the political sphere, however, that global telecommunications will have the most beneficial effect, because the development of interactive modes of communication makes possible the political participation of the citizenry inhabiting even the most remote locations.

Pool's vision of what telecommunications can do to humanize our environment, promote cultural diversity, and empower the individual is provocative and useful for information specialists to bear in mind. Yet how realistic is it? Even with desktop publishing and camcorders, can a small enterprise compete as a provider of information with large, well-funded news organizations? How valid is Pool's rejection of government regulation in any form? Can the marketplace be trusted as the only regulator of new technologies, especially when large telecommunications corporations already hold an unfair advantage? Pool's passionate belief in personal liberty and in the value of free access to information is inspiring, if not entirely convincing.—*Eva M. Sartori, University of Nebraska–Lincoln.*

Computer Files and the Research Library. Gould, Constance C., ed. Mountain View, Calif.: Research Libraries Group, 1990. 59p.

An outgrowth of a 1989 Research Libraries Group (RLG) workshop on machine-readable data files, this booklet is intended to fill a need, in its editor's words, for "a succinct publication describing innovative approaches to collecting, describing, and providing service for computer files in research libraries." The volume consists of four brief essays on specific aspects of computer file management. Also included are the agenda and discussion summaries from the RLG workshop, as well as an appendix presenting summary results

of the initial 1987 RLG Machine-Readable Data Files (MRDF) project, in which six RLG libraries developed model approaches for "collecting, controlling, and providing access to computer files."

Margaret Johnson's essay, "Adding Computer Files to the Research Library: Issues in Collection Management and Development," begins with the truism that while computer files have grown increasingly important as an information resource, librarians have not paid adequate attention to organizing and controlling access to such materials. If libraries are to maintain their centrality within the institutional "information infrastructure," librarians must take up this responsibility. The bulk of Johnson's essay is a concise but reasonably comprehensive consideration of the key facets of such an enterprise. These include understanding the complex and various nature of machine-readable data resources; identifying and locating data files (she provides a brief but useful list of directories for this task); selecting appropriate files (she reviews some basic and commonsensical collection development criteria that can be applied to computer files); and coordinating and supporting data file access.

In "Machine-Readable Texts in the Academic Library: The Electronic Text Service of Columbia University," Anita Lowry takes as her point of departure an exchange on the HUMANIST online discussion group about the ready availability of primary texts in electronic form as a step toward making the library the "laboratory of the humanist." She addresses the challenges and questions facing librarians when they undertake provision and support of electronic texts for scholarly purposes beyond basic reference applications. Her essay includes an incisive consideration of the differences between published and unpublished electronic texts. This discussion leads into a description of the Electronic Text Service (ETS) research and instructional facility at Columbia. Lowry explains the goals of the ETS project in relation to the key issues facing librarians who provide electronic textual resources to humanities scholars and students. She then examines "infrastructure" requirements (facilities, equipment, and staff support), access policy, and procedural issues as they have been dealt with at the ETS. Lowry's discussion provides few answers to the questions it raises; its real value lies in the candor and seriousness with which Lowry confronts the difficulty of integrating scholarly electronic textual resources into a service- and access-oriented research library setting.

Lynn Marko's contribution, "Bibliographic Description of Computer Files," is a brief but thorough overview of the problems involved in cataloging a large collection of machine-readable social science files, specifically the data archives of the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). She describes the conversion of some 1,300 records from the SPIRES database used to produce the ICPSR Guide to Resources and Services into USMARC format via a tape load to RLIN, and the subsequent challenges faced by the Uni-

versity of Michigan cataloging staff in the editing of the resultant RLIN records. Marko concludes her piece with an outline of the "issues that are applicable to the bibliographic description of all computer files," followed by a short paragraph on the project's benefits for the University of Michigan library.

Katherine Chiang's "Computer Files in Libraries: Training Issues" is an inventory of the skills and expertise required to incorporate electronically stored information into the library. Like the Marko piece, it is rather brief, but substantive even so. Chiang focuses on the unique knowledge demanded for the tasks of selecting, acquiring, cataloging, and servicing machine-readable files. She then addresses central issues related to the training of library staff to meet the demands of managing computer files, stressing level of service, structure of service, service novelty and its relation to existing staff competencies, and staff learning styles as key points for special attention.

The inclusion in this volume of discussion summaries from the RLG workshop is particularly welcome because these are at least somewhat visionary in articulating the formidable array of tasks facing the broader research library community as it begins to integrate computer data files into its collections. In fact, the most telling aspect of the discussions is that they are far less tentative than the four articles in setting an agenda for making computer data files a central resource in the research library of the near future. The result of these efforts is a more than adequate primer for librarians just beginning to think about computer file management and access.

But collective thought about "the big picture" may be what most of us need quite urgently at this moment. There is, in fact, something frightening about the pace with which the national information infrastructure is evolving. Two recent examples make this clear: the anarchic expansion of information resources on the Internet and the proliferation over the past half-year of government information distributed on CD-ROM. Each of these developments has serious implications for any discussion of computer data file management and access in the research library context, but neither is mentioned anywhere in this volume. Still, I learned much by reading this RLG publication, although I am concerned that the information it provides may be of only limited value, given the velocity of change in the current electronic information environment.—*Joseph Lucia, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.*

Van House, Nancy, and others. *Measuring Academic Library Performance: A Practical Approach.* Chicago: American Library Assn., 1990. 182p. (ISBN 0-838905-293). LC 89-77253.

When drafting this review, I was prompted by some misguided stylistic conceit to seek the grabbing quote. The beautiful phrase "shut up in measureless content" in *Macbeth* provides a backdrop for my ambivalence toward the work under review.

Some eight years ago, I gave a workshop on the bibliographer's craft—including collection evaluation—to collection development librarians at a large upper-midwestern research library. I recall two pieces of advice I gave to that workshop group. First: "beware the fetish of mensuration"; that is, for a significant part of selectors' work, empirical measurement and quantification are of use only in the largest sense. Second: regard measurement, quantitative norms or standards, algorithms, and partial or full-blown models of collection development as heuristic exercises rather than empirical tools for decision making; that is, one should assess and, if necessary and relevant, perform such measurements as exercises in informed persuasiveness and the art of the exposition and interpretation of the mostly undemonstrable. On the one hand, measurement and measures have their greatest social utility as a form of argumentation that complements subjective judgment and experience. On the other hand, they are least useful when reified and put forth as objective determinants of human action or policy or when regarded as an intrinsic part of something called "the science of