

recommended. *The Digital Word* brings together some of the best thinking about textual analysis and the state of scholarly communication.

- There is probably no better statement on the relevance and conceptual foundations for descriptive markup schemes for textual computing than the essay by James H. Coombs, Allen H. Renear, and Steven J. DeRose. Its republication in this volume is certainly welcome and needed.
- Allen Renear and Geoffrey Bilder make an excellent contribution to current thinking on scholarly communication. Their discussion of both current and future use of the medium goes to the heart of the nature of the digital word in our increasingly networked world, making clear that most frequently the electronic medium is used for something other than scholarship or scholarly communication.
- Peter Robinson's essay on the critical edition will be an important point of reference for the growing number of discussions in this area. His argument brings together many of the ideas articulated in recent editorial theory and computer-aided analysis. The computer promises to offer to the critical edition the flexibility and, through the ways it documents its decisions, the credibility it may have previously lacked.
- Jeremy Clear offers an excellent report on the British National Corpus Project. His detailed description of the most important tool in the history of corpus linguistics will satisfy both the uninitiated and the more knowledgeable.
- Nancy Kaplan and Stuart Moulthrop are not the first scholars to have critiqued Marcia Peoples Halio, who suggests that the composition skills of students may be negatively influenced by their choice of an operating system, but they use their analysis as the foundation of a more interesting argument concerning the relationship between the way we perceive and the way we write.
- Jacques Virbel provides interesting insight into the development of the new

Bibliothèque de France with his description of their scholar's workstation project, a project both visionary and functional. While criticisms of the workstation will abound, it is clear its designers worked with rather than in isolation from researchers in understanding issues of research in an electronic environment.

There is far more that is excellent in *The Digital Word* than there is that is bad. It is a shame, however, to have included those essays that are so disappointing, and that the editors did not use an organizing principle less ambitious and more coherent.—*John Price-Wilkin, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.*

Dordick, Herbert S., and Georgette Wang. *The Information Society: A Retrospective View.* Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1993. 168p. (ISBN 0-8039-4186-2); paper (ISBN 0-8039-4187-0).

To paraphrase a cliché, inside this slender volume there is a book struggling to emerge. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that this is a book in embryo. Embryo, that is, as Groucho Marx defined it in a letter: "My plans are still in embryo. In case you've never been there, this is a small town on the outskirts of wishful thinking."

The authors set out to examine "to what extent an information society has emerged, and whether the promises of the past 30 or more years have been met." They also aim to explore the consequences of "informatization" on nations either newly industrialized or yet-to-be-industrialized. Both Dordick and Wang are experienced researchers and commentators on the social and cultural aspects of information technology applications. Following a brief review of the premises and assumptions, hopes and expectations expressed by the information society forecasters in the 1970s and 1980s, the authors describe three scales for measuring the informatization of a country. The infrastructure scale is measured by the density of telephone lines, television sets, newspaper circulation and the amount of data terminal equipment on public telephone and telex

networks. The economic scale is computed by the percentage of information workers in a nation's work force, the contributions of the information sector to the GNP/GDP, and to productivity in the industrial sector. Finally, the social scale is seen as the rate of literacy and the percentage of a nation's school-age population attending tertiary schools. Data are assembled and analyzed for nineteen countries, which are stratified as high-, middle- and low-income nations. By these measures, the authors determined that "in general . . . what was forecast decades ago was confirmed," that there has been significant growth in all three scales in almost all nations, that the richer nations are more advanced and advancing faster than poor nations with undereducated populations, and that the United States and Japan are closest to being information societies, although they fall short of expectations in many ways. None of the generalizations or conclusions will surprise or inform anyone who has been reading the U.S. newspapers over the past ten years.

This book's value lies in the data the authors have assembled. Although the data are sparse and "not easily amenable to either longitudinal analysis within a country or comparative analysis among countries," having the numbers is useful. The book has some merit as an undergraduate textbook, in its broad stroke presentation of global economic changes. It has nothing to say about the application of information technologies in the scientific or academic realms. The authors define and discuss information purely as a commodity (e.g., in numbers of words supplied and in words consumed).

The writing is clumsy and jargon-ridden, and an odd naiveté pervades the book from opening premises to its conclusions. In the second paragraph the authors note without a hint of irony, "Looking for the information society is made more difficult by the enormous amount of data. . . ." In their opening sentences they ask, "Have modern information technology and telecommunications heralded a new society, and a new man and woman? Has the Industrial

Revolution been replaced by the information revolution, with none of the disbenefits of the former?" Is this empty rhetoric or do the authors really expect these things to have happened in thirty years? The authors provide no historical context, no measure by which to assess whether the rate of change they observe is reasonable or expected. They cite no studies or data on normal rates for technology transfer and diffusion to support their conclusions. Most of the data they have assembled and displayed relative to "informatization" is from the 1980s. Yet the authors conclude, "For those who study the theories of information societies in the twenty-first century, it will not be difficult to see the mistakes others have made in the past several decades. The determinists have erred when communication messages were thought to have the effect of a hypodermic needle; they erred when development communication was treated as a panacea to problems in Third World nations; and we believe they are wrong today when information technologies are portrayed as the panacea for equitable world economic growth." The critical and informed reader may find these beliefs and conclusions startling, given the paucity of data, the comparative brevity of the period under study, and the profundity of the restructuring in process.—*Nina W. Matheson, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland.*

Scholarly Communication in an Electronic Environment: Issues for Research Libraries. Ed. by Robert Sidney Martin. Chicago and London: Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, Association of College and Research Libraries, ALA, 1993. 136p. \$28.99, ACRL member price \$24.99 (ISBN 0-8389-7686-7).

On the face of it, the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) of ACRL seems an unlikely organization to sponsor a program on new information technologies. But the proceedings of the section's 1992 preconference amply demonstrate that special collections librarians and historians of the book can bring