

ing staff—in the reorganization of the school's computing and library services. One of Meachen's findings is that the merger usually is a top-down process and the people at the top are more positive about mergers than the frontline staff.

A special piece is Robin Wagner's "The Gettysburg Experience." Wagner discusses the painful experience of the radical integration of computing and libraries at Gettysburg College. She analyzes the failure of the merger from three perspectives: planning mistakes, faulty structure, and lack of awareness of cultural differences between the library staff and the computing staff. The bad merger inevitably resulted in a negative working climate of demoralized librarians and staff, inferior delivery of services, and, finally, the discontent of college students and faculty. Wagner shows us just how damaging such a bad merger can be.

*Books, Bytes and Bridges* explores the important topic of reforming the relationship between computing services and libraries in academic institutions. It does not attempt to offer a single solution to this complicated issue. Instead, the book provides different perspectives on the topic, from those of librarians to those of computing center employees, working at institutions of various sizes, and who have experienced everything from moderate coordination to fanatic integration. It includes an adequate index and helpful information on contributors. Despite some weaknesses, such as the discrepancy in quality among the collected papers, the book as a whole offers a unique and significant contribution to this still-evolving field. It should be on the purchasing list of all college and research libraries and on the required reading list of academic administrators.—*Xiaochang Yu, Virginia Commonwealth University.*

*Disaster and After: The Practicalities of Information Service in Times of War and Other Catastrophes.* Ed. Paul Sturges and Diana Rosenberg. London: Taylor Graham Publishing, 1999. 174p. \$46 (ISBN: 0-947568-77-8).

We are all familiar with the cliché about not judging books by their covers; it may be wise to extend the warning to titles now, too, for lurking behind this volume's rather prosaic title is something far more exciting and thought-provoking than the words would suggest. This stimulating collection of essays deals not only with disasters such as flood and fire but also concentrates on war and ethnic cleansing. But even that (and the work's more descriptive subtitle) fails to tell all because the book is really about the larger picture of the threats to, and triumphs of, information service in a very hostile world. It is certainly not the book's aim to serve as a recruitment tool for library, archival, and records management programs, but well it might be. Rather, it offers an antidote to the meek and mild image of information specialists and, indeed, puts our profession in the front ranks of the many battles being fought in an era blithely referred to as the Information Age. The tales in these pages are often dark, despite the "enlightened" times we live in.

The book begins innocently enough. The introduction by Derek Law uses the standard approach, suggesting that to avoid disasters one, impossibly, must expect the unexpected. And then, aptly enough, that is what is delivered. Although there are some straightforward descriptions of library disasters and responses, one finds oneself, as in a disaster itself, in a very different realm in which a whole new way of thought is needed. The editors apparently knew exactly what they were doing, as their explanation in the back of the book proves.

The essays are from the proceedings of an international conference sponsored by the IGLA (International Group of the Library Association) held on September 4–6, 1998, at the University of Bristol. There, in the "charmed setting of an English provincial town," informational professionals gathered to report on occurrences in far-flung, violent, and often dangerous settings. In the opening essay, Linda Stoddart provides some of the basic vocabulary for disaster preparedness

and response but takes us out of a library setting into the information management needs of organizations such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of Africa. She discusses information needs in responding to crises, the role of technology, what can be achieved, and what needs to be done. John F. Dean then shifts to a panoramic view of the appalling archival and library destruction in Burma, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, giving a bit of information on the preservation of palm leaf manuscripts and focusing on the extent of the destruction and the nature of the response. In the next essay, Maj Klasson takes a look at another type of damage—the psychological toll the Linköping library fire had on the Swedish town and staff. Many electronic list subscribers may remember graphic reports of this fire when it happened in 1996. Similarly, the role of the Internet and other advanced technologies (such as mobile telephones) in responding to the floods in southwest Poland in 1997 is mentioned in two companion articles by Bożena Bednarek-Michalksa and Andrzej Nowakowski. The authors relate how one library responded and how another was helped. (Again, many on library and archival electronic lists around the world had better information than what the mass media provided.) Disorders from civil disasters get their share of attention, too. In an arresting turnabout on the relationship between disasters and information,

Vladimir S. Lazarev writes on how solutions were found in Belarus to remedy the lack of available information to deal with literal fallout from Chernobyl; and Resoum Kidane discusses information services during the war in Eritrea, reiterating a theme that unfortunately sounds again and again in the following essays. Although we often have to fight great battles to persuade resource allocators that libraries, archives, and records centers are important, enemies of every description seem to have no doubt of it. Libraries, information centers, and cultural repositories always seem to be among the first targets of those seeking to destroy and demoralize a nation or a people. Diana Sayej-Naser vents her rage on the effects Israeli occupation has had on information services, education, etc., in the Palestinian territories; and Sava Peic and Aisa Telalovic, in spare prose, describe the incredible turmoil and loss of human life and cultural treasures in the debacle of Sarajevo. Many librarians and other similar specialists lost their lives for going to work and doing their jobs, which, in light of what was going on around them, was nothing short of heroic. As perhaps is to be expected in such charged arenas of conflict, many of the authors seem partisan in their perspectives and often use language and hurl accusations as inflammatory as the deeds of the destroyers they decry. “We make no apology for this,” Paul Sturges says in his final thoughts, concluding the volume. “Let the academics decide on matter of credit and blame[;] we want to know how information professionals work when the props of a predictable natural environment and ordered society are knocked out from under them.”

Despite the partisanship prevalent in many of the pieces, this reader found the most enthralling essay to be the one eschewing it altogether. John Gray’s essay, “Documenting Civil Conflict: The Case of the Linen Hall Library, Belfast,” is truly inspiring. These passionate and dedicated information specialists, devoted to no cause other than truth and its elusiveness, collect on all sides of the conflict, creat-

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ing a library that truly belongs to all. If politicians and citizens were as truly evenhanded and fair as these professionals, there would be little need for a book such as this. And because they are not, we can be grateful that the editors and the writers have shared their experiences to create a book of great value to those dedicated not just to the preservation of information and information systems, but also to culture and its legacy. "This was not an academic conference," Sturges concludes, but he and Rosenberg have, nevertheless, created a work of interest to academics, information professionals, and the engaged general public.—*Harlan Greene, Charleston County Public Library and the South Carolina Preservation Project.*

*Distance Learning Technologies: Issues, Trends and Opportunities.* Ed. Linda Lau. Hershey, Pa.: Idea Group Publishing, 2000. 252p. \$69.95 (ISBN 1-878-28980-2). LC 99-048171.

*Distance Learning Technologies* is not recommended. The stated purpose of this compilation is "to provide both academicians and practitioners with a body of knowledge and understanding regarding the distance learning technologies." The editor is a financial consultant with Salomon Smith Barney, Inc.; her academic background was with the School of Business and Economics at Longwood College. Many chapter authors have expertise in management information systems and business management; some have expertise in educational technology. Despite the stated purpose of the book, it contains little on technology per se. Some interesting case studies are reported; however, they do not make the book a worthwhile purchase. In the preface, it is asserted that the book is organized into three sections: theoretical, conceptual, and case studies. However, it is unclear from either the table of contents or the chapters themselves that there is any distinction between sections. Case studies, for example, appear throughout the book.

If a misleading organizational layout were the book's only problem, it could

possibly be overlooked. But many of the chapters focus on general educational principles and theories, and contain very little on distance learning or technology. In addition, the titles of many chapters do not reflect the content. On occasion, it is difficult to determine whether the chapter authors are actual practitioners of distance learning or are conducting literature reviews. Even when suggesting areas for further research, it is unclear whether the authors intend to conduct the research themselves or are recommending it for others to do.

A few of the case studies do present interesting and useful, if not innovative, information and represent the best the book has to offer. For example, the chapter on the Department of Defense's electronic school presents a model case study for successful implementation of distance learning with clearly outlined advice for the beginning distance learning practitioner. The digital video chapter also presents some interesting information, although its value is limited because the use of technology was tested in an on-campus environment. It would have been more interesting if the authors also had attempted to use the system in a remote situation and been able to discuss the results of using video technology across a distance with its associated issues of access, bandwidth, and download times. The Pepperdine case study also presents valuable advice on developing a sense of community in the distance learning setting. This topic is of interest to many in the field as a way to increase and maintain student motivation to complete distance learning programs. In addition, the chapter on using the Internet in Egypt presents a fascinating perspective. However, it too would have been more interesting had it contained less general theory and more detail on the implementation of the project and related issues such as translation of material into Arabic or the information infrastructure of the Arabic world. These rather interesting studies are refreshing bits in a compilation that adds little value to the literature on technology and distance learning and teaching.