Library and Information Science: A Guide to Key Literature and Sources by Michael F. Bemis (review)

Andrew P. Carlin

Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science, Volume 39, Number 1, March/mars 2015, pp. R4-R5 (Review)

Published by University of Toronto Press

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/ils.2015.0008
He addresses the messy issues of the contexts within which and for which policies are generated and recognizes that “this also raises a question about who information policy is for” (p. 11). Policy has a variety of needs, and Cornelius recognizes and describes many of those needs through his treatment of the various kinds and purposes of policy.

In fact, each chapter and section of the book flows into the next, so that there is a relatively seamless treatment of policy needs that relates one to the next. For example, his discourse on the public sphere is necessary for the discussion of censorship and other topics. What constitutes a public sphere contributes to (if it does not determine) what constitutes freedom of speech and freedom of expression. Those freedoms rely on rights—individual and government—that precede freedoms. In the real world, Cornelius says, “we must consider what actually happens as well as what we intend” (p. 88). If information is seen as a marketplace, then it must be accepted that governments do much to regulate markets for information, just as they regulate all types of markets. Cornelius does, though, present thoroughly considered arguments for free speech, particularly those articulated by Joshua Cohen.

Cornelius’s book is no polemic, which is refreshing in itself. It is intended to be, and succeeds as, a careful beginning, well argued and presented, for those who would delve more deeply into information policy. This work would be a splendid introduction to anyone who yearns to know more about the fundamental nature and principles of information policy. Perhaps especially, this work would make an excellent textbook for any course on the subject.

John M. Budd, professor, School of Information Science and Learning Technologies, University of Missouri


This is an annotated bibliography of library and information science literature, circa 2000–2012. Michael Bemis outlines his aims: “to collect as much of the available information sources regarding various aspects of the profession as reasonably possible and then to organize them in a logical fashion” (p. xi). Both aims are enormous undertakings, and this is a worthy successor of the *ARBA* (*American Reference Books Annual*) (p. 132).

Nearly 1,600 entries are organized according to Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH). Thus, the contents of each chapter are taken to be self-evident (Bemis feels the need to justify the inclusion of chapter 11, “Epistemology and Philosophy,” however, even when he lists a risible three monographs).

The unbalanced nature of this bibliography is exacerbated by the use of LCSH as its organizing device. Indicative of this is “Library Science, History of,” which merits five items, and (without getting into the library/information or
science/studies debates) the paucity of entries on information science within this or the “Library Science, General” chapter. It is also unclear why there should be an absence of entries for given subject headings. For example, listing “Bibliometrics” and then not including a single title from the recent proliferation of basic, practical guides leaves chapter 37 on statistical approaches to information uneven.

While annotations to main entries are effective commentaries on some books’ contents, the heavy US bias affects both items for inclusion and those titles that are selected for more in-depth coverage. The criteria for inclusion (“timeliness,” “authority of resource or author qualifications,” “professional standing,” “special features,” p. xii) are subjective (“in my professional opinion,” p. xii). Users must therefore accept that they are reliant on the compiler’s decisions throughout. This reviewer, without having to consult OCLC WorldCat (p. xi), was able to list further works that match these criteria for each chapter yet are unaccountably missing from this guide.

A paradox of relying on publishers’ catalogues for “additional resources” is that Bemis is unable to judge resources that should be afforded more considered treatment. While his annotations are useful, it arbitrarily sets up a two-tier system of “core resources” and “also-rans,” and because he hasn’t consulted the “additional resources” he cannot address this deficiency.

Coverage of sectors is variable: Corporate librarians will find only a couple of relevant entries; however, school and academic librarians are served extremely well. Environment scanning could have complemented LCSH to ensure more adequate coverage of current interests and practices in library and information science, such as disambiguating cataloguing, classification, and collection management to reflect enhancements, and the expanding range of the “core activities” of information professionals.

Reviewing bibliographies inevitably highlights omissions at the expense of assiduously compiled reference lists. This volume is a convenient collection management tool, and it may be useful to course directors looking for recent monographs suitable for particular library and information school modules. It is not comprehensive enough for researchers familiar with this field or anyone competent at using proprietary bibliographic databases to search for relevant references.

Andrew P. Carlin, librarian, St Columb’s College


This accessible, brief book summarizes the rapid developments in information technology over the last few decades as they relate to library and information science. De Saulles focuses on how technological developments in information dissemination and retrieval can guide librarians, publishers, and society in general.