

storage, processing, retrieval, and transmission. Other prominent themes are the information economy (information as a new resource replacing capital and labor), the dangers of information control, and the commercialization of information. These claims and cautions have a very real basis in fact. But the worried, harried, and even apocalyptic undercurrents in these articles seem out of proportion. Perhaps we have unwittingly come to take our own vantage point at the center of the information whirlwind for the center of the world itself.

A generic typology of articles emerges from the collection. First, there are straightforward historical surveys, such as A. J. Meadows's solid chronicle of information science theory. Then there are short- or long-term forecasts which attempt to extend the historical survey into the future. A good example is F. Wilfrid Lancaster's 1978 article, "Whither Libraries or, With Libraries" which predicted paperless information exchange. Many of the pieces, like Anne W. Branscombe's "Who Owns Creativity? Property Rights in the Information Age," are concerned with problem definition. Of those that express the author's opinions or values, most are critical of the consequences of the information revolution. The overall impression, almost certainly unintended, is that humanistic values and technology are in conflict. Only the articles on ethics are both personal and positive in tone.

Many of the articles adopt either the dualistic or the therapeutic approach. The dualistic approach presents a topic in terms of opposing interests (freedom of information versus privacy, intellectual property versus dissemination, etc.) which must somehow be adjudicated. The therapeutic approach sees social phenomena (inequality in access to information, information overload, job loss through automation) as problems, for which cures must be found. Both approaches leave the reader with a list of conflicts, implying that solutions are imminent. Scholarship that looks toward the future in this way dates rather quickly.

Although this collection is far from perfect, library school faculty may wish to use it as a text, or as a starting point for course readings of their own design. Every academic librarian ought to be familiar with the issues covered in this book, but they might be better off compiling their own "ideal" anthology.—*Jean Alexander, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.*

*Knowledge, Power, and the Congress.* Ed. by William H. Robinson, and Clay H. Wellborn. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1991. (ISBN 0-87187-632-9); paper (ISBN 0-87187-631-0).

Nothing is so commonplace among librarians and information professionals as the belief that we live in an information age. Nor is anything so unchallenged among many of us as the claim that knowledge is power. Yet we seldom test our assertions. We rarely pit them against the stubborn realities beyond the walls of academia. In this book, *Knowledge, Power, and the Congress*, a collection of papers presented at a symposium sponsored by the Council of Scholars of the Library of Congress, we have an opportunity to examine some of the profession's shibboleths. This book explores the interplay between understanding and the manipulation of resources and considers the practical worth of our era's proliferation of data.

The testing ground for these assertions about information and knowledge is the United States Congress. Representing a variety of disciplines and a host of perspectives, the authors of these papers allow us to see firsthand how Congress—arguably the most powerful legislative body in the world—attempts to make decisions with what are arguably the most extensive sources of information in the world. The editors of the collection, William H. Robinson, deputy director of Congressional Research Service, and Clay H. Wellborn, also with the Service as a policy research manager, draw together an impressive array of specialists—historians and sociologists, economists and political theorists, journalists and work-a-day politicians—to participate in a spirited debate. The contribu-

tors comment, speculate, and quarrel about a range of topics, including the management of vast amounts of information, the limits and potentials of social research in informing public policy, and the difference between information and knowledge. The results are enlightening.

Mancur Olson, a professor of economics at the University of Maryland, argues persuasively, in a paper typical of the volume as a whole, that ideology rather than any reasoned evidence from the social sciences determines the thinking of most voters and politicians. Both Left and Right, he charges, rarely have any evidence for their policies: they merely labor under what he terms a "rational ignorance." In a response to Olson's remarks, Newt Gingrich, the ubiquitous representative from Georgia, counters that people (and by implication Congress) are not rationally ignorant, as Olson maintains, but are rationally informed. Members of Congress learn what they need — not all they could. They recognize that they must make the best decisions possible under the constraints of limited time and knowledge. "Life is sloppy, hard, and complicated," Gingrich reminds us, "and too often our academic and intellectual elites have withdrawn from the fundamental realities of life." According to Gingrich, Olson's academic blinders prevent him from comprehending the realities beyond the economist's graph.

In a less combative and more scholarly vein, Ernest May, a professor of history at Harvard, in a penetrating article entitled "Knowledge, Power and National Security," offers a parallel caveat to Gingrich's insistence that we should take all of life into our analysis. May argues that we must never confuse information and knowledge. To illustrate his point, May compares the French and German intelligence corps prior to the Second World War. He offers an example in which the Germans' superior knowledge of the character and thinking of their enemy enabled them to act decisively even with very limited information, while the Allies' access to superb intelligence and an enormous amount of

detailed information, by contrast, was virtually worthless without a corresponding knowledge. May's analysis has merit for us today.

In an age enamored with the potential uses of information and a Congress awed by its burgeoning quantity and availability, we would do well to consider the significant ways in which knowledge and information differ. *Knowledge, Power and the Congress* confines its focus to the institutional life and political realities of Congress. The volume isn't aimed at or written by academic librarians, although James Billington, the Librarian of Congress, contributes a brief foreword to the volume. Even so, this title holds relevance for academic librarianship. While the book will not likely alter any collection development policies or suggest improvements in the day-to-day realities of the academic library, it offers its readers an opportunity to examine afresh the interplay between information and life—between data and understanding. It raises the kind of questions that we librarians and information professionals need to explore—questions about the nature of power, the significance of knowledge, and the meaning of the information revolution. Scholarly, thought-provoking, and surprisingly relevant, the book exemplifies the best in Congressional Quarterly's publishing tradition.—Steve McKinzie, Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

*Science at Harvard University: Historical Perspectives.* Ed. by Clark A. Elliott and Margaret W. Rossiter. Bethlehem, Pa.: Lehigh University Press, 1992 (distributor, Associated University Presses, Cranbury, N.J.). 380p. alk. paper, \$35 (ISBN 0-934223-12-2.). LC 89-64067.

For most of its history, Harvard University has been home to a considerable share of the science done in North America. Thus, when the university was preparing to celebrate its 350th anniversary in 1986, a volume commemorating Harvard's contribution to the organization and cognitive development of science in the United States made eminent sense. It also made sense that Clark A. Elliott and Margaret W. Rossiter would