

Review Articles

Information for Administrators

Information for Administrators; a Guide to Publications and Services for Management in Business and Government. By Paul Wasserman. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1956. 375p. \$6.

A guide to information for administrators might deal only with the function and art of management. Far broader in scope, this manual provides a comprehensive guide to information sources in the fields of business and economic activity, knowledge of which is an essential tool for the implementation of decision-making in business. It is not solely bibliographic; rather it emphasizes organizations and other sources of information which may or may not include publications.

An outline of the services of libraries and the government as dispensers of business information is followed by the major portion of the book, which is developed by types of information sources, with separate chapters on business services, periodicals, newspapers, sources of statistical data, associations and organizations, and general reference books. Next, sources of information on local areas and guides to international information are discussed. In the last two chapters, basic publications in business administration and in public administration are pulled together from all types and sources, in the only two wholly bibliographical sections in the book.

The result is an extraordinarily comprehensive survey, yet one which is specific enough to be a useful tool, always accurate but minus the web of intricate detail which usually accompanies descriptive annotations of statistical data. Mr. Wasserman has been highly successful in producing a book which falls squarely between the usual rudimentary or elementary guide, chiefly distinguished by its sins of omission, and the involved technical discussion of statistical series, distinguished by its abstruseness for the layman. For instance, the chapter on the sources of legislative and regulatory data is the clearest, most concise exposition for the layman—and

incidentally the non-legal librarian—that this business librarian has seen. The legislative process is described succinctly from the drafting of the bill through its consideration in committee, placement on the calendar, procedure in the House and Senate, referral hearings in conference, presidential action, and enactment into law. Short, careful descriptions of the government documents which are the by-product of the legislative process are included. The description of legislative documents is carried to the State and municipal level.

The treatment of other aspects of United States federal government documents seems less compact. In Chapter II there is a very short general survey of the government as a source of information; in Chapter VII, devoted to the sources of statistical data, guides to governmental sources are given only cursory attention, followed by a fairly detailed but rather loose account of the Federal statistical system and an inadequate list of "compilations" (meaning basic statistical sources); in Chapter 10, covering business and government research organizations, there is a short section on the role of government in research. Anyone who works with business information sources understands well the difficulty of dealing with the complexity of government documents in a survey of this kind. Either they receive wholly inadequate treatment, too vague to be useful, or they simply move in and take over the book. Fortunately there are available excellent guides devoted wholly to government documents as business sources, all of which Mr. Wasserman faithfully lists.

The sections on periodicals and newspapers are particularly well done. The selection of titles is discriminating, the annotations careful and detailed, and the discussion of indexes, directories, guides, abstracting services, union lists and so on most helpful. Included are rather detailed descriptions of the financial sections of the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald Tribune*, and an exposition of financial terms.

The sources for statistical data are the segments of business information which always

give conscientious compilers the jitters. Whether to develop primarily by type of source, type of publication, by area, or by subject is a difficult decision and hard to stick by, once made. Mr. Wasserman has succeeded in avoiding the seemingly inevitable inconsistencies and compromises no better and no less than the rest of us. It is most important to the layman, perhaps, that the compiler, in any discussion of statistical sources, should map a clear trail from the currently issued statistics in any series to the annual compilation and on to the historical base book (or vice versa, of course). This guide is only partly successful in performing this function.

The facilities of trade associations and chambers of commerce receive more than adequate attention, the contributions of research and professional associations perhaps not enough, if consideration is taken of the comparative quality of their publications. On the other hand, the author no doubt had in mind that local chapters of trade associations are often the most accessible source of aid to business men, even though they publish nothing.

The outline of the kinds of information basic to appraisal of local areas (including primary sources of such information) is something beyond what this reviewer has come across anywhere else and should be most useful to students in marketing, business men and all those interested in the marketing research process. It adds to a field scantily covered in most bibliographic guides.

It is difficult to compare this book with others in the field. Coman's *Sources of Business Information* (1949) is out of date. Miss Manley's *Business Information* (1955) was based on public library experience and service and so conceived for a different purpose. This book does not, in intention, compete with the technical manuals such as *Government Statistics for Business Use*, by Hauser and Leonard (1956), *Measures of Business Changes*, by A. H. Cole (1952), or *Measuring Business Changes* by Richard Snyder (1955).

The paucity of the information given in some of the bibliographical citations is to be deplored. Often no address is given for associations and organizations. Some of the listings of services without issuing body are so fragmentary as to be useless as a guide to procurement. No prices are given. Omission of

such information is particularly unfortunate since many of the types of publications listed are not included in standard publishing lists.

On the whole, the book well fulfills its purpose as "an aid for those active in business and government, as well as for students in the field." In fact, the author seems unnecessarily modest when, after stating that "inclusion or exclusion [of information sources] was determined on the basis of the author's personal familiarity with publications and organizations and his accessibility to data," he adds that "the examples used as illustrations throughout the book do not necessarily represent the best or even the most important of their types." Why not? Mr. Wasserman is obviously well informed and well able to defend his selections, which are excellent.

The typography and format of this book are a credit to the Cornell University Press. —Janet Bogardus, Librarian, Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

The Classified Catalog

The Classified Catalog, Basic Principles. By Jesse H. Shera and Margaret E. Egan. With a Code for the Construction and Maintenance of the Classified Catalog, by Jeanette M. Lynn. Chicago, American Library Association, 1956. 130p. \$4.

It is always a pleasure to welcome a new addition to the material on librarianship. From the first notice to the profession in 1950 of a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation for a study of a classified catalog, librarians particularly interested in this problem, or in the potentialities of such a medium of control, awaited the results with interest. The study was instituted at the John Crerar Library in Chicago by Jesse H. Shera and Margaret E. Egan, with the cooperation of Herman Henkle, librarian. We have now the finished work which Mr. Henkle in his Foreword says will leave some unsatisfied, please others, but provide, he hopes, a useful study for those librarians interested in developing this type of catalog.

It is a useful and needed study, and although some may smile a little at the pontifical statement in the Foreword about becoming a better classifier by reading Chapter