

Information nation: education and careers in the emerging information professions. Jeffrey M. Stanton, Indira R. Guzman, and Kathryn R. Stam. Medford, N.J.: Information Today, Inc., 2010. 240pp. ISBN 978-1-57387-401-4 (pbk) US\$ 35.00.

Starting in London in 1962 as a trainee overseas banker headed towards the Middle East, I actually signed a contract with my employer effectively giving my services for my entire working career. Fortunately for me and many of my colleagues, we were not held to such an impractical contract. By the mid-70s I found myself in Chicago, though still in the banking industry. By the 1990s I was beginning to teach at university level. In this capacity I was advising my students that not only were they likely to experience several jobs but also likely to experience several careers. So when I picked up *Information nation* to write this review, I was a little surprised to find one of the blurbs on the back cover stating that it contained valuable information for high school and college students but not mentioning anyone else beyond that demographic. At indexing conferences and workshops I have attended I find many of the participants in the same age group as myself and, yes, even those with 20 or more years of experience seldom started out in indexing. Further, many professional indexers merge indexing with related skills in editing or information technology (IT). This is a most useful book for the indexing community whatever your age, experience, or degree of involvement.

The authors are each experienced teachers of their subject and teaching is, of course, by far the best way of learning. Each has links to Syracuse University, (NY). Jeffrey Stanton is the Dean of Informational Studies at Syracuse and both Indira Guzman and Kathryn Stam obtained their doctoral degrees from Syracuse University. Their book is divided into three sections, the first talks about how information is changing our world, the second covers that often mystifying topic of what it is that information professionals actually do, and the third looks to the future. Four appendices give exercises and discussion points, suggested additional reading, a partial list of [North American, US, anglophone-world?] universities offering information degrees, and a list of web sites for job seekers.

Since for everyone who is able, a job is a top priority, the authors introduce their discussion with a look at the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, where huge amounts of taxpayers' money are spent in gathering information on employment and unemployment with the object of trying to predict the future. While such predictions are not always correct, it is clear that there is no better basis than using copious amounts of accurate data. Using this data we are informed that there are five times the number of job openings for systems analysts as for marketing majors, the former job description usually covering information technology professionals in business contexts. And if that is not sufficient enticement to indexers, the authors recent research revealed that, 'U.S. students ranked as low as 35th in science proficiency and as low as 36th in math proficiency. In both of these cases, the U.S. ranked substantially below our economic competitors such as Korea, the U.K., and Germany'. Good news indeed for either our non-American readers, or older Americans with superior skill sets.

Just as large corporations hire cooks and kitchen staff for staff cafeteria, fields that may have nothing to do with the service or product supplied by the organization, so all corporations, institutions and organizations hire IT personnel. The authors point out that this entire field expands the individual's employment opportunities exponentially. This is demonstrated by quotes from students of and workers in IT, both positive and negative, to provide a balanced view from a personal perspective rather than the cold information of plain statistics.

In the third section which looks to the future of IT, the authors point out that librarians are the original information professionals. Though librarians are often perceived as lonely 'shelf readers', most actually thrive on puzzle solving to a degree that most of the public would find intimidating. With 'information' becoming a new kind of 'required literacy', much the same as the 'three Rs', librarians and indexers are in an enviable position regarding future career options.

In chapter 2 the differences between 'information' and 'knowledge' are mentioned but only 'information' is indexed with no cross references to 'knowledge'; (the index continues to the end of the very last page, so possibly this was editing due to space considerations). While we have access to enormous amounts of information, as a society we are less and less able to apply this information into practical knowledge or wisdom.

However, in summation, this is a valuable handbook for anyone looking to break into IT and to understand the skill sets and aptitudes required for future success in the field. It is compact and written in a conversational manner with quotes and anecdotes of the experiences of actual individuals in the field.

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