

**Cleveland, Harlan.** *The Knowledge Executive: Leadership in an Information Society*, New York: Dutton, 1985. 263p. \$18.95. LC 85-4442. ISBN 0-525-24307-0.

What are the qualities essential for leadership in the next decade? How will the "informatization of society" (Cleveland's phrase) change the way we work and communicate? Can social and educational institutions change rapidly enough to keep pace with technology? These questions are all too familiar by now. As Cleveland acknowledges, "in a remarkably short span of years—the 1970s and the early 1980s—the once prescient notion that industrial society was being transformed into a postindustrial, 'information,' or 'knowledge' society has become a cliché."

Beyond the superficial discussions of information and technology, complex issues are still waiting to be explored. The premise of *The Knowledge Executive*, a new definition of leadership based on the restructuring of social relationships within an information rich society, seems to promise new insights. Unfortunately, Cleveland delivers little more than a series of generalizations, loosely interwoven with personal anecdotes and quotations from familiar figures. His analysis of information begins with the crucial distinction between symbols and tangible goods, between the inherent limits of natural resources and the exponential expansion of information. He points out the advances in information transfer and briefly discusses how these have affected our concept of owning, copying, and storing data in all formats. All too soon, however, the focus shifts to Cleveland's personal experiences, and an anecdotal deluge swamps any budding theory of information. By the end of the book, the reader will know a great deal about the author's varied career but very little more about the issues outlined in the introduction.

Cleveland does discuss the characteristics of his ideal knowledge executive at length, although not necessarily with any real depth. Those who aspire to be "get-it-all-together people," as Cleveland terms them, must first and foremost be generalists. Attitudes are more important than

specific skills, and a liking for "process" seems to be essential. In addition, knowledge executives will share certain concepts such as "the notion that crises are normal, tensions can be promising, and complexity is fun; a realization that paranoia and self-pity are reserved for people who don't want to be executives; and a sense of personal responsibility for the situation as a whole."

Probably the most thought-provoking aspect of the book is what it leaves out. The storage, retrieval, and dissemination of information are central to the mission of libraries. Almost all of the information issues discussed in *The Knowledge Executive* are exemplified in today's library systems. The extent of the future gap between information rich and information poor may ultimately depend upon the expansion or contraction of free library services. Nevertheless, Cleveland does not mention a word about libraries in his entire presentation. This, of course, is an oversight he shares with many who write about the fu-

## Heritage on Microfilm

Rare and out-of-print titles and documents on 35mm silver halide microfilm.

- French Books before 1601
- Scandinavian Culture
- 18th Century English Literature
- Victorian Fiction
- Literature of Folklore
- Hispanic Culture

Send for catalog and title information today.



GENERAL  
MICROFILM  
COMPANY

70 Coolidge Hill Road  
Watertown, MA 02172  
(617) 926-5557

ture information society. If libraries are indeed fulfilling their information mission, why do they have so little impact on published views of the future? This is a question that *The Knowledge Executive* does not even consider. Perhaps those concerned with the future of libraries should give it some thought.—Mary J. Cronin, *Loyola University Libraries, Chicago, Illinois.*

*Costing and the Economics of Library and Information Services.* Ed. by Stephen A. Roberts. London: Aslib, 1984. 349p. £20. ISBN 0-85142-176-8.

I am interested in how the falling cost of electronic systems may change the cost structures of libraries and so cause us to rethink how libraries function. I think of cost as a measure of the resources, human and otherwise, that are committed to a particular activity. When libraries commit resources to electronic systems, will the electronic activity so enhance library services that the library will receive a net increase in resources when it adds the electronic system? Or will the electronic system largely represent a shift in resources from conventional activities? I look to a study of library costing to shed light on this issue.

I am aware that academic libraries have competition. Most faculty members subscribe to some journals privately, buy and hold books personally, correspond with colleagues, and send and receive working papers. Often, departments have libraries—some just subscribe to a newspaper or a few journals; some are quite large and formal. Academic libraries themselves may operate as a single facility or as a constellation of libraries with some organizational superstructure. I would like to know what mix of private and collective action is best; what balance of central and distributed facilities achieves the highest level of net benefit? What is the total cost of information flows under each different pattern? What are we willing to pay for libraries under each pattern? Will electronic systems change the relative cost advantage and the pattern of willingness to pay for one pattern over others?

I turn for advice to the collection of essays under review. The questions I pose

are difficult and will not yield quickly to systematic investigation. I will find satisfaction if the volume provides sound guidance on how to address these questions.

There are some glimmers of insight here. Ross and Brooks' essay "Costing Manual and Computerized Library Circulation Systems" (1972) measures time (a resource) under an existing system and forecasts how much time will be required under an electronic system. They look at user time as well as library staff time, and so gauge willingness to pay as well as implementation expense. One would like to know the outcome. Now that electronic circulation systems are commonplace, why not report a before-and-after evaluation or a comparison of a library that has a manual system with one that has an electronic system? At least there is sound guidance as to method in the essay presented.

Bookstein's "Economic Model of Library Service" (no source is given for it) also has some good ideas. At an abstract level, the essay identifies a balance between cost and willingness to pay. Its strength is in identifying alternative decision-making regimes. It would be interesting to see these ideas made more concrete. If electronic systems are likely to be fee based while print remains with zero incremental charge, how will libraries evolve? Is such an evolution desirable?

Raffel's essay, "From Economic to Political Analysis of Library Decision Making" (1974), is useful. Conflicting interests will be resolved differently when consumers shop with dollars than when they shop with votes or influence. Willingness to pay depends on who's paying. I suspect, however, that who's paying is usually clearer than Raffel intimates. Libraries are often found in hierarchical environments where conflicts can be resolved at modest cost. In any event, analysis may narrow the scope of conflict.

Line's "Psychopathology of Unecconomics" (1979) is a light but wise essay on the foibles of library managers when confronted with changing costs.

Overall, however, this 347-page book is disappointing. Many of the essays are old. The median publication date of the articles