

he has been the recipient of at least two awards for investigative journalism. In a review of Soley's "Radio Warfare: OSS and CIA Subversive Propaganda" in the September 1990 issue of *Annals of the American Academy*, the reviewer concludes that the work is "a solid well-documented book that makes good and interesting reading." Ditto from this reviewer for *Leasing the Ivory Tower*. Recommended for all academic libraries and all public libraries serving college communities. This is one to read and discuss with colleagues.—*Elaine Harger, New Jersey Historical Society, Newark*

**Targowski, Andrew S.** *Global Information Infrastructure: The Birth, Vision, and Architecture*. Harrisburg, Penn.: Idea Group, 1996. 383p. \$59.95. ISBN 1-878289-32-2. LC 96-13580.

Andrew Targowski is a refugee from Communist Poland now attached to Western Michigan University. The aim of his book is to describe the future of the information superhighway and the development of what he terms the New Information Civilization (NIC) in light of his experience as director of the Greater Kalamazoo Telecity. This is tackled in an ordered fashion by describing types of network and telematic services, and the concepts of electronic money, knowledge, business, government, and education. Much of this information is imparted in the fashion of a catalog, with widespread use of bullets and many diagrams. The book concludes with a vision of the TeleCity, or electronic town.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of Targowski's work is why, given the existing scope and potential of information technology, it is published as a book at all. His publishers have done him a grave disservice by their neglect of the editorial process. Some of his prose is gruesome: "An user not only will look for a bigger choice of information . . ." is typical. But more significant than this contempt for grammar is the ideology

revealed by the sentence construction and writing style. Take this example, for instance: "The information utility will [sic] applied at home, in the office, the library, classroom, and many public locations. People will act and think differently. The information utility will interact directly with human memory and mental processes. It will be an extension of a brain/mind. . . . This telepower . . . will improve the learning, storing and thinking capabilities of mankind." The method is stark and simple; link together a number of staccato and unqualified statements and arrive at the desired conclusion. Its combination of the imperative and a reverence for technology reminds one of interwar fascism while Targowski's writing is all the more alarming for its palpable ignorance of history and its lack of human agency. Humankind is reduced to units reacting predictably and gratefully to the beneficence of technology.

Technocrats and politicians share a common characteristic. They believe that however bizarre their claims, if they are made often enough and with enough conviction, people will begin to accept them and their inevitability. It is thus entirely appropriate that the first section of this book consists of excerpts from a 1995 speech by Al Gore. A seamless string of political rhetoric—"a new reality," "benefit all humankind," "facilitate solutions to global environmental challenges," "bridging differences between nations and people" are representative samples—aptly sets the unacademic tone of this volume which is immediately reinforced by obeisance to the work of Toffler.

There is a fervor and dogma about this book that is almost religious. Targowski tells us that the NIC "will integrate us commercially and culturally" and goes on to explore such concepts as "One Human Family in One Electronic Global Village" and the "Global Brain." Perhaps the most alarming

statement of all is a prediction that *Homo sapiens* will metamorphose into *Homo electronicus*. In an isolated gesture toward the world of literature, he mentions H. G. Wells, but Wells at least restricted his fantasies of dehumanization in the "One World State" to fiction.

Occasionally, Targowski stumbles over some of his confident propositions and a chink of uncertainty opens up. He admits that technology is not neutral and that the Electronic State could produce Big Brother just as readily as the Electronic Republic, but fails to develop either of these vital questions. Nor does he expand on the tentative admission "if the virtual library becomes a reality." Such, apparently, are the certainties of those at the cutting edge of information technology that fundamental issues and the questions they raise can be awarded a mere mention in passing.

For librarians, the most interesting chapter is that on electronic knowledge. Like many technocrats, Targowski praises the concept of the digital library and its ability to allow users to identify and locate relevant information resources in a logical fashion, blissfully unaware that libraries and librarians have been successfully doing just this

for centuries. Ignorance then gives way to condescension: "The eclectic influx of automated and electronic systems causes some confusion among library management. . . ." The conclusion that "this needs to be replaced with a vision of ultimate solutions . . ." begs the question of exactly where the confusion lies; and whether such finality can ever be part of the human condition. In this chapter of seventeen pages, Targowski makes reference to a mere six sources, two of them his own writing. The index has three separate references to "library," which all refer to the same page number; and it is so crude it could only have been produced by a computer.

In Targowski's world, technology is not at the service of society but, rather, drives it. This in turn leads to the predictable assumptions of the Information Age—that the ready availability of electronic information is going to promote peace, prosperity, and democracy; and overcome environmental degradation and poverty. An avalanche of information delivered electronically is Targowski's answer to the world's problems. He dismisses Arab countries, China, and North Korea as areas suffering from "informational slavery" and fails to consider the possibility that fundamentalism and reactionary behavior in those societies may well be aggravated by his NIC, its globalization, and consequent cultural imperialism. Not everyone, and for good reason, wishes to have their national identity destroyed by an electronically disseminated homogeneous culture. Targowski's work would be all the more convincing if he could explain exactly how the people of Ogoniland, East Timor, and Chiapas, who all live in robust free market economies, are going to achieve liberation through the availability of information technology.

The overall impression given by the book is that the NIC is a neutral agency that will reach "the smallest village in

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every part of the world," benefiting all of humanity. This wears rather thin after the admission that America is the major supplier to the telematic industry and that the NIC will promote economic development and job creation in the United States as well as its cultural exports. Targowski's assumption that this economic activity will "trickle down" to the periphery has long ago been challenged by economists and geographers. Some people it seems, in true Orwellian fashion, are to be more

equal than others.

This book should be consulted widely by librarians but for wholly negative reasons. In one volume, they can find virtually every cliché of the Information Age and be forewarned of major threats to so many of the values at the heart of their profession. It should challenge us all to double our efforts as guardians of the collective memory and promoters of civil rights.—*Christopher Merrett, University of Natal Library, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa*