

except where they directly converge with IT policy. Likewise, there is no discussion of technology export restrictions as these have become of little relevance or of state policy issues such as shrink-wrap licensing and economic development initiatives. Although the emphasis on the corporate viewpoint may be seen as a shortcoming by those in libraries and higher education, government policy tends to be economically driven. An understanding of the issues from this perspective is of value for those librarians seeking possible solutions that are in the best interest of libraries and their users.

The essays are written in a scholarly, but easy-to-read, style, not an easy task when describing legal and legislative issues. Each chapter has suggestions for further reading, and an index makes it easy to locate discussions of particular legislation. This book will be of interest to library administrators involved in IT policy decisions as well as anyone who desires an overview of the major IT issues and resulting legislation. —Mark A. Stoffan, *Western North Carolina Library Network*.

**Digital versus Non-Digital Reference:**  
*Ask a Librarian Online and Offline*. Ed. Jessamyn West. New York: Haworth (published simultaneously as *The Reference Librarian*, no. 85), 2004. 154p. alk. paper, paper \$29.95 (ISBN 0789024438); cloth \$49.95 (ISBN 078902442X). LC 2004-6246.

Librarians, in their role as information providers, have always had to adapt to changing technologies in their continuing efforts to serve patrons. *Digital versus Non-Digital Reference* explores the use of digital reference services (online and e-mail) in various settings and describes the many issues and challenges librarians face in the development and implementation of these types of services. The book is arranged thematically and examines issues from the past ("The Old versus The New"), the present ("How We Do It Here") and the future ("A Few Things to Think About").

Section one offers the reader an opportunity to review traditional reference services and to view them through the lens of more recent technologies. Do these older models of reference service provide lessons from which we can still learn? This section examines the history of telephone reference; presents a case study on the development and implementation of an e-mail reference service; explores the use of digital reference as a teaching tool for new librarians; considers the relationship between university archives and remote users in the digital age; and includes a survey of e-mail reference service in use in public libraries.

At its most basic, telephone reference served as a precursor to the myriad AskA services that exist today. The telephone extended beyond the walls of the physical building and served as a conduit for allowing the user to enter the library remotely. M. Kathleen Kern states that in the early days libraries marketed their telephone services to a specific clientele, mainly businessmen. "Businessmen" writes Kern, "were thought to be people with serious questions and with serious community influence." By the 1970s, reference services began to change their focus to encompass the broader community. One issue of particular concern was on what types of questions were acceptable for telephone reference. Although many libraries varied in their approach, others viewed telephone reference as "a limited method of reference communication... and discouraged providing in-depth and research assistance via telephone." According to Kern, "a less than perfect innovation in the past does not indicate that a similar future innovation will fail, but it should be something from which we learn."

Susan M. Braxton and Maureen Brunsdale explore the historical development of e-mail reference services and report on its use at Illinois State University. E-mail was initially used in libraries for interlibrary loan because it was a cheaper alternative to telephone or traditional mail commu-

nication between borrowing and lending libraries. ILL was the primary use of e-mail in libraries until the late 1980s. According to Braxton and Brunsdale, by May 1999, only about 45 percent of academic libraries provided some form of e-mail reference.

Abigail Leah Plumb shares her library school experience as a volunteer at the University of Michigan's Internet Public Library (IPL), a digital library provided for the Internet community. Plumb believes e-mail reference can help develop and foster traditional reference skills during the formative stages of a librarian's career. The use of a medium such as IPL provides students the opportunity to control specific aspects of the reference interaction in a way that cannot be done in person. "Without the immediate (and potentially terrifying) presence of a patron, we learned how to examine and evaluate a patron's question with care; how to figure out where to start searching; how to organize the information gleaned and how to respond to the patron in a comprehensible way." Over the course of answering questions, volunteers also learned the value and importance of cooperation among colleagues.

Katharine A. Salzmann discusses the special issues university archivists face in using digital reference to provide access to archival records for remote users. Reviewing the current literature, Salzmann explains that although archives' Web sites have evolved in the past decade, they still "do not provide full, online access to the rich array of repositories' holdings." According to Salzmann, this continuing lack of access to actual content, even as more finding aids are made available on Web pages, forces archivists to continue in their role as intermediaries between remote users and the university's records.

Section two includes four essays examining digital reference in specific areas: commercial and library-sponsored AskA services in the U.S. and abroad, statewide 24/7 virtual reference service, collaborative virtual reference in a special library con-

sortium, and multilingual chat reference in a suburban public library system.

Jenny Baum and Kate Lyons compare commercial and library-sponsored AskA service programs by looking at the quality of services and "popular perceptions about the commoditization of information." According to Baum and Lyons, the information professions "must have not only the ability to work with a diverse patronage, but have access to the most diverse and most authoritative information, be familiar with all the available resources readily available to them, be motivated to answer all questions equally, and thoroughly understand the question." Do commercial services provide this level of service? Baum and Lyons compare screening standards for library-sponsored and commercial AskA services, and examine AskA services in international libraries specifically focusing on experiences in Norway, Sweden, Mexico, France, and Cuba. They conclude that library-sponsored online reference and AskA programs "provide a more desirable service." The caveat being that as long as users are willing to pay for information, commercial AskA services will continue to be a viable option.

Carol Van Houten outlines the history of New Jersey's Q and A NJ virtual reference service and Scott Matheson does the same for LAWLINE. Q and A NJ is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and is free to all New Jersey residents. This essay gives detailed information on the background development and implementation of the program; examines the service in action; presents the results of a survey of participating librarians; and includes predictions on the future solvency of the program. LAWLINE is the New England Law Library Consortium (NELLCO) collaborative virtual reference service, a joint project of nineteen libraries across seven states. Matheson provides a detailed account of the relevant issues such as scheduling, staffing, software selection, policies, product access, licensing issues, and training.

The section's last essay, by Edana McCaffery Cichanowicz and Nan Chen, looks at the efforts of the Suffolk County, New York, public library system to provide a multilingual chat reference service to its multiethnic population. For Suffolk County, the first order of business was deciding which languages to include. Using a variety of resources such as those of the U.S. Census Bureau, and working with local groups such as Literacy Volunteers of America and ESL programs, member libraries decided to make their live chat reference service available to Chinese- and Spanish-speaking communities. The essay concludes with some very practical and useful strategies providing a framework for other libraries wanting to expand chat reference services to immigrant populations.

The final section of the book leaves the reader with more things to think about concerning the future of digital reference services. Mita Sen-Roy asks us to think about whether digital reference enhances

traditional reference service. She introduces the concept of "affordance" in the digital realm and asks us "to explore our choices of technology as measured by their potential for social impact."

The last essay explores the need for additional research on AskA services. Bruce Jensen explains that unobtrusive study techniques that work well in traditional settings do not transfer well to online reference and can, in fact, undermine service quality. He encourages managers of virtual reference services to work toward developing research methods that are more appropriate for the evaluation of digital reference services.

By looking back at the past we can find answers for the future. Although this book does not offer answers per se, it does provide guidance and useful examples. *Digital versus Non-Digital Reference* is a good resource for anyone wanting to get an idea of the issues involved in providing digital reference services.—*Kelly C. Rhodes, Appalachian State University.*