

*Information Technology in Librarianship: New Critical Approaches*, edited by Leckie, Gloria J, and John E. Buschman. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2009.

review by Kathleen de la Peña McCook

A much needed updated critical approach to technologies and networked information resources in libraries has been assembled in the context of market pressure to adopt new innovations. Gloria J. Leckie and John E. Buschman have gathered an impressive roster of thoughtful writers to address both the metalevel analysis and overviews of technologically related issues and the macro-and microlevel processes and effects surrounding information-technology relationships and their implications for librarians and the LIS discipline. The Introduction by Buschman and Leckie helpfully frames the sources of critical approaches, and then *Information Technology in Librarianship* is divided into two parts.

In Part One, "Foundations," Chapter 1 is "Critical Theory of Technology: An Overview" by Andrew Feenberg, Canada Research Chair in Philosophy of Technology at Simon Fraser University, explores the concept of technical action and the illusion of transcendence that accompanies it. Chapter 2: "Surveillance and Technology: Contexts and Distinctions" by Gary T. Marx, Hixon-Riggs Professor of Science, Technology and Society at Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, examines the new general ethos of surveillance. Nick Dyer-Witheford, faculty member at the University of Western Ontario and author of *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High Technology Capitalism* assesses elements of techno-capital and its appropriation of the Internet in Chapter 3: "Cycles of Net Struggle, Lines of Net Flight." An overview of the literacies associated with the Fordist Keynesian welfare state is provided in Chapter 4: "A Quick Digital Fix? Changing Schools, Changing Literacies, Persistent Inequalities: A Critical, Contextual Analysis" by Ross Collin, who studies dominant literacies and is a doctoral student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Michael W. Apple, John Bascom professor of Curriculum and Instruction and Educational Policy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Sandra Braman, professor of communication at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee has conducted research on the macro-level effects of the use of new information technologies and their policy implications. She is the author of Chapter 5: "Theorizing the Impact of IT on Library-State Relations," in which she offers a compelling reason for libraries to care about larger theoretical concerns and perspectives.

Part Two, "Applications," begins with an essay by John M. Budd, professor at the School of Information Science and Learning Technologies at the University of Missouri. In Chapter 6: "The Prospects for an Information Science: The Current Absence of a Critical Perspective," Budd takes apart the phrase 'information technology' and draws upon Wittgenstein to

posit that LIS needs to transcend the paradigm to institute a more critical study of informing. Chapter 7, “Librarianship and the Labor Process: Aspects of the Rationalization, Restructuring, and Intensification of Intellectual Work” by Michael F. Winter, social and behavioral sciences librarian at the University of California, Davis Library and author of *The Culture and Control of Expertise: Toward a Sociological Understanding of Librarianship* examines the elements of library work within modern capitalism. Roma Harris, author of *Librarianship: The Erosion of a Woman’s Profession* and professor in the Faculty of Information and Media Studies at the University of Western Ontario has written Chapter 8: “Their Little Bit of Ground Slowly Squashed into Nothing: Technology, Gender and the Vanishing Librarian” in which she observes that the complete disappearance of librarians would be tragic for libraries and their users. In Chapter 9: “Children and Information Technology” by Andrew Large, CN-Pratt-Grinstad Chair in Information Studies at McGill University, issues are raised surrounding children’s use of IT.

Chapter 10: “Open Source Software & Libraries” by Ajit Pyati, assistant professor of the Faculty of Information and Media Studies at the University of Western Ontario, explores the challenges of OSS for libraries and articulates the political side of the debate. “Technologies of Social Regulation: An Examination of Library OPACs and Web Portals” is the subject of Chapter 11 by Gloria J. Leckie, of the Faculty of Information and Media Studies at the University of Western Ontario; Lisa Given, associate professor at the University of Alberta, School of Library and Information Studies and Grant Campbell, Faculty of Information and Media Studies at the University of Western Ontario. They use regulation theory to examine long standing information retrieval problems. Chapter 12 is a review of the extensive literature surrounding the topic of digital preservation. “Libraries, Archives and Digital Preservation: A Critical Overview” by Dorothy A. Warner, preservation librarian at Georgetown University and author of *A Disciplinary Blueprint for the Assessment of Information Literacy* concludes with the observation that solutions to problems of digital archiving are still years away. Co-editor John Buschman is Associate University Librarian for Scholarly Resources and Services at Georgetown University Library and author of *Dismantling the Public Sphere: Situating and Sustaining Libraries in the Age of the new Public Philosophy*. In his concluding essay, “Just How Critical Should Librarianship Be of Technology?” Buschman uses James O’Donnell’s book, *Avatars of the World: From Papyrus to Cyberspace* to remind readers that the reinvigoration of a public sphere will not occur without a critical approach to technologies and that librarianship cannot play a positive role in the “democratic consequences” of IT without this critique.

*Information Technology in Librarianship* is a book of robust thought, insight and clear analysis. Recommended for foundational reading in library and information science education programs and to all library workers who wish to gain understanding of the complexities of our future.