

BOOK REVIEW / CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

Information Nation: Education and Careers in the Emerging Information Professions. By Jeffrey M. Stanton, Indira R. Guzman, and Kathryn R. Stam. Medford, N.J.: Information Today, Inc., 2010. 240 pages (soft cover). ISBN-978-1-57387-401-4. CAN\$35.00.

Where are the information professions headed? How will the future affect our jobs? Will we need additional training? Where do we find it? How can we keep our work fresh? What should we expect from new graduates; and ultimately, what is expected of us? Hoping to answer these vital questions, authors Jeffrey M. Stanton, Indira R. Guzman, and Kathryn R. Stam have joined forces to bring us *Information Nation: Education and Careers in the Emerging Information Professions*. Stanton is the Associate Dean for Research and Doctoral Programs at the School of Information Studies at Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York. Guzman is the Associate Professor of Management Information Systems and Business Administration at Trident University International in Cypress, California, and Senior Research Associate of the Information Technology Workforce at Syracuse University. Lastly, Stam is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at State University of New York Institute of Technology in Utica, New York, and manages an online graduate program in Information Design and Technology.

These varied academic perspectives are evident in *Information Nation: Education and Careers in the Emerging Information Professions*. While the book is geared to students, information professionals, and researchers, the authors' focus is on information technology (IT) professionals, not librarians. The education and work of librarians are mentioned, but librarians are almost completely absent in the book, which is emphasized by the authors' frequent reference to the lack of female information professionals. A predominantly American approach is presented, which is not always relevant to Canadian librarians. This book is best suited for current and prospective students, as well as librarians considering taking their information management skills outside the library.

This three part book is written in an accessible and often humorous tone, making it a decent read. The introduction and Chapter 1: Wanted: Information Professionals act as a launching point into the past, present, and future of the field of information. The authors argue that former concepts associated with IT such as expense, complexity, and the "strange class of too-smart people with minimal social skills paid top-dollar" (p. xi) are just that – a thing of the past. They also look at the dot-com bust of 2001 and its consequences, including the foreign outsourcing of IT.

Part 1: Information is Changing the World is composed of Chapters 2–5: Information Wants to be... Disorganized; Doctor, Lawyer, Scientist, Chief: Every Profession Depends on Information; Horseshoes to Biofuels: Why Technology Development Gets Easier All the Time; and Where's My Job? How Outsourcing and Offshoring Change Industries. Within this section Stanton, Guzman, and Stam describe the complexities of information management and security, as well as the role information plays in a

wealth of industries. The authors surmise that information professionals are "outsourcing-resistant" (p. 46), arguing that the profession involves tasks that cannot be replicated by automation or inexpensive labour. They also point to the "T-shaped" (p. 48) structure of our work that includes the use of broad knowledge and one or more areas of expertise.

Part 2: What Information Professionals Do in School and Work begins with Chapter 6: The Student Perspective of the Information Field and Chapter 7: Barriers and Challenges: The Student Perspective. Here the authors present their research data obtained over three years. Student interviewees share their educational wants and needs, practical experiences, and their conceptual image of information professionals. Chapter 8: The Workplace Perspective on the Information Field and Chapter 9: Barriers and Challenges: The Workplace Perspective consider those who are already professionally employed. A positive and practical image of the information professional emerges as someone who enjoys life-long learning and appreciates and integrates technology into their professional desires and personal interests. Chapter 10: Stereotypes, Culture, and the Information Professions addresses the stereotype of information professionals as nerdy white men and the barriers women and visible minorities face as a consequence.

The most anticipated portion of the book, Part 3: What's Next?, includes the last five chapters. Chapter 11: Cyberinfrastructure: A Long Word for the Future of Information Technology examines information as a substrate for society that sustains every aspect of what we do. Chapter 12: The Original Information Professionals is the sole chapter that focuses on librarianship. The authors address how librarians interact with people, organizations, and technology. They note that while librarians require the ability to learn technology on demand, technology is really only half the story. The other half is the user, who represents the "larger collaborative and organizational challenges surrounding the use of information and technology" (p. xii). Good librarians are already aware of this so it seems, since according to the authors, we are ahead of the game. Chapter 13: To iSchool or Not to iSchool looks at the merging, reorganization, and collaboration of academic departments striving to produce future information professionals. Chapter 14: Where Have All the Students Gone? Diversity and Recruitment Challenges in the Information Professions is self explanatory. Lastly, Chapter 15: What's Next? summarizes the book and concludes with 10 important steps for recruiting prospective students.

The book wraps up with four very useful appendices; Appendix A includes a list of exercises and discussion points for each chapter; Appendix B provides additional readings; Appendix C is a directory of degree programs in the information field; and Appendix D lists URL's of job boards, organizations, and codes of ethics.

While you may pick up this book hoping to find answers to the questions posed at the beginning of this review, do not

expect to have them explicitly answered. What *Information Nation: Education and Careers in the Emerging Information Professions* provides is a general look at the information professions, and the affirmation that our professional survival and success will continue to depend on mastering technology, practising entrepreneurship, and proving that what we do is integral to every sector of society.

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