

**Streamlining Library Services: What We Do, How Much Time It Takes, What It Costs, How We Can Do Better.** Richard M. Dougherty. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2008. 2680p. \$45.00. ISBN 0810851989.

In this work Richard Dougherty—whose distinguished career included a post as University Librarian at UC Berkeley and as founding editor of the *Journal of Academic Librarianship*—updates a volume whose second and most recent edition appeared in 1982 (the first was in 1966). In the case of both revisions, the intervening period had wrought great change in libraries. Between 1966 and 1982 OCLC and cooperative cataloging significantly changed technical services. Between 1982 and 2008 the Internet became very widely used, altering most aspects of operations in academic libraries.

Despite the profoundly altered landscape, most of the techniques Dougherty documents for understanding library operations would have been familiar in 1966. Most of the book is a catalog of well-established measurement techniques with roots in industrial engineering. Dougherty is doubtlessly correct that many library procedures could be improved with some thoughtful investigation. But because Dougherty offers so many examples of different techniques, his book is best consulted on an as-needed basis, rather than reading straight through.

That's not to say it isn't educational. Dougherty contextualizes tools most readers would be familiar with, by giving examples of how they are used. For example, block diagrams can depict a circulation system; check lists can keep track of reference questions; and

flow process charts can track every step in the process of an interlibrary borrowing procedure. And so forth.

Mixed among the familiar are some vaguely Orwellian surprises; the two-hand operation chart is designed to literally keep track of what a person's left and right hands are doing during a typical operation. But extreme rigor has its benefits. Dougherty documents how use of the two-hander improved a library's book checkout procedure, by systematizing placement of bar codes on all circulating books. With this improvement one hand didn't have to wander around books of various dimensions in search of the bar code.

Despite Dougherty's obvious passion for efficiency and writing flair, reading this book in 2008 feels anachronistic. It is deeply rooted in the physical library building, even though academic libraries especially are in the process of reinventing themselves for the digital age. This isn't Dougherty's "fault," but instead a reflection of the fact that we don't yet have established ways to measure our success (or lack thereof) in the digital age. Most academic libraries still faithfully record their circulation statistics and gate counts, even though these metrics are ever less helpful at determining the health of libraries.

Because we live in a digital age, any honest evaluations of current physical processes would be likely to yield the conclusions that positions are expendable or should be radically transformed. Change is hard, and at the end of the book Dougherty excels at describing how to streamline current activities and manage the resultant organizational change. Aggressively asking people why they are doing something that no longer seems

to make sense is a recipe for hostility. Instead, Dougherty recommends asking the people involved for suggestions about how to streamline a process in order to spur them to think critically about the need for that process. This way the solutions are shared by all rather than imposed by management.

When Dougherty brings out the next edition of this book in 2034, let's hope that our profession has a much better handle on how to measure success in the electronic age. It will be somewhat depressing if the two-hand operation chart is still a highlight of the book by that point.

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