but the authors made an effort to include Canadian sources as well.

Part 2 includes several chapters covering bibliographic sources. The revisions to these chapters concern updated material on electronic databases (e.g., OCLC, RLIN) and services (e.g., DOCLINE). Chapter 5 ("Electronic Bibliographic Databases") provides the reader with an excellent overview of databases relevant to the health sciences, with an appropriate emphasis on National Library of Medicine databases.

Information sources are discussed in the chapters of part 3. Two chapters are exceptionally well done. Diane Futrelle and James Curtis' chapter on "Audio-visual, Microcomputer, and Multimedia Reference Sources" has been expanded to reflect the increasing importance of the non-print collection in health sciences libraries, particularly in academic environments. Included is a discussion of reference and collection development issues related to learning resource centers that complements the coverage of specific reference tools. Frieda Weise and Judith Johnson's chapter on "Medical and Health Statistics" is an outstanding overview of a notoriously difficult area of health sciences reference. The scope of this chapter is more comprehensive than others (for instance, it includes a glossary of terms), certainly warranted in this subject area.

Guides to the literature of the sciences frequently neglect historical sources, so it was good to see the recognized importance of the historical context in medical bibliography as reflected by the continued inclusion of historical sources in this new edition. Although these sources may fall only within the scope of research libraries, knowledge of their existence should be required of all health sciences librarians.

The only omission noted was a discussion of the Internet. Although a comprehensive treatment would not have been appropriate, a chapter describing the rapidly increasing use of Internet resources in health sciences libraries would have been timely. The Internet has become a major communication and information source, and the single mention of it was disappointing in a 1994 book.

In summary, this new edition of what has become the standard guide to the health sciences literature in North America should be included in all health sciences collections. It will serve as an excellent introduction and overview to the field for library science students and practicing librarians alike.

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Library Without Walls is a softcover book that is tightly packed with scads of information on every important aspect of the electronic library. Its sixteen chapters cover both the low and high ground, from subscribing to basic online bibliographic utilities to becoming a "cybarian."

The chapters, each by different authors, are organized into ten sections. The first two sections, "Electronic Reference" and "Obtaining the Document," cover the very basics of electronic library services, such as online reference tools, full-text databases, document delivery, and the use of online utilities such as OCLC and RLIN.

In the third section, the book kicks into a higher gear. "Creating the True Electronic Library—LANs and the Internet" discusses how to plan an electronic network and explains the Internet from both technical and conceptual perspectives. An excellent chart outlines the different types of network cabling and their capabilities. An up-to-date networking glossary and some very useful sample handouts on BIT-NET and listservs are provided.

Section 4, "The True Electronic Journal," offers a brief discussion on that topic, while section 5 moves into expert systems and the role of librarians in developing hypertext software. Section 6, "Electronic Gear," discusses CD-ROMs; the basics of fax, e-mail, and video conferencing; and Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML): software/hardware-independent publishing.

"Imaging Systems" constitutes section 7. Its two chapters explain optical character recognition, CD-ROMs, the World Wide Web, and other aspects of imaging and related communication technologies.

The pace changes with the eighth section, which is a chapter on staff training for the electronic library. Section 9 is dedicated to marketing the electronic library and includes an excellent chapter on broad marketing concepts. There is also a dialog on reinventing the profession and a chapter on providing services outside the library, mostly through selective dissemination of information (SDI) services.

The tenth and final section is a case study of an electronic library.
the Balcones Library Service at the University of Texas at Austin (UT-Austin), which is located fifteen miles from campus and open only four hours per day.

Many of the chapters identify organizations producing or using the technologies that are discussed, and a few provide extensive supplementary reading lists. The authors (most of whom work at UT-Austin) also provide their postal or e-mail addresses, obviously suggesting their availability for further discussion on their chapters.

Library is a very readable book, but it is also very uneven. The chapters are disproportionate in size, depth, and quality of discussion. Some provide a thorough analysis of a topic, while others are cursory. Though it can be browsed easily, an index would have been very useful for referring to the numerous acronyms and concepts that are covered. The level of the intended audience is unclear. Judging by its several basic chapters, it seems to be meant for librarians who are just beginning to build electronic libraries and who will use this as a tool for further planning and development. However, those who are not yet online will probably find the information environment to have advanced beyond this book by the time they are ready to progress further. Conversely, online librarians are likely to find little use for discussions on how to verify an interlibrary loan, how a fax machine works, or what a bar code is.

Also, the book's format is distracting. Rather than using an academic style, the presentation is casual, with the authors speaking in the first person. Although this personalizes the narrative, it can also create a "preached-to" feeling. Furthermore, the print mysteriously shifts in size for no apparent reason, and there is no standard for chapter format or references. One chapter had a "Summary" in its very middle. These characteristics are irritating and only tend to detract from the authority of the information being presented. (However, upon telephoning the Special Libraries Association [SLA], I was told that the value of producing timely information for its membership is the overriding concern in publishing works of this type.)

Despite its few content shortcomings and untidy style, Libraries Without Walls can make a useful addition to the appropriate library. Health sciences librarians who are just beginning to build an electronic library or who are new to more advanced libraries and want to learn more about this topic will find it a handy reference and discussion guide. Too, it should enable readers to communicate intelligently and knowledgeably with campus or hospital information systems personnel. But librarians who are already using online resources, networked CD-ROMs, institutional e-mail, and the Internet are not likely to find enough new information in this work to make this a high-priority purchase.

Writing a book on the near future is a difficult endeavor, because the future may have already passed by the time the work has been produced. It was therefore apropos that SLA publish Mastering Information in the New Century so quickly that it could cite trends as current as April 1994.

Author Cetron is a futurist who has founded Forecasting International and has published numerous books and articles on forecasting the future, chiefly in the fields of industry and education. He and coauthor Davies, a freelance writer who has also published on the topic of forecasting, have assembled a myriad of facts and trends and applied their predictive skills to offering a look at the future in the field of information, especially as it concerns corporate information specialists.

Mastering is a small book containing five chapters in fifty-two pages. These chapters review the early stages and growth of the information superhighway, summarize the trends affecting the information environment, and forecast the effects this will have on our culture and society. The remaining forty-one pages form a massive appendix, in which broad trends are listed and then itemized. There is no index; however, due to its size and arrangement, the book is eminently browsable.

According to SLA, this book is intended to provide a "titillating look into the information frontier." It is a limited goal that is hardly achieved. The work is an easy read—about fifty minutes—and covers the information trends that will change our lives in the next six years (roughly to the year 2000). In fact, the narrative is so fluid that it begins to sound like an expanded address at an association convention.

Though there are many interesting facts offered concerning global and national trends in the broad field of information, it is disappointing to find that many of them have already been covered in detail by the professional literature as well as by the popular press, including Newsweek, Omni, and U.S. News and World Report. Nevertheless, there are some facts that are not as well known, like the Delphi study indicating the probability of thirteen major developments in computerization, their U.S. market value, and the nations likely to lead in developing them.

Even more disappointing is that the discussion of the trends is superficial and the forecasting pedestrian where it pertains to libraries. We know, for example, that by the year 2000 it will be more convenient to search for library materials by computer than by
coming to the library. That future is already history. We know that libraries will survive for the foreseeable future, though with a different emphasis. We also know that talking to computers instead of controlling them with mice (a prediction for 2002) is upon us now.

The chapter on “Policy Questions” does offer some provoking thoughts on the future of the information superhighway, such as the role of government, commercial for-profit use, access issues regarding the poor, intellectual property, and free speech. But the final chapter, “Information Specialists for the New Century,” discusses in barely five pages the effects that these trends will have on librarians and information specialists and provides no new revelations.

The appendix also falls short. Though it is replete with statistics that may be useful to some, many of the trends and facts have been known for years, such as the downsizing of the military, the aging population, the growth of wellness programs, and “bloodless surgery” with lasers. On the other hand, the concepts of “virtual” or “informatics” are not apparent either in the appendix or the text, if indeed they appear at all.

For the health sciences librarian, Mastering has very little relevance other than as a broad compilation under one set of covers of data and general trends that might be useful in creating a planning document. But, for the price, one could do as well or better with a periodical literature search.

In general, Mastering is a supermarket cake, with all frosting and no dough. Though it was intended as such, after a few titillating mouthfuls of sugar, one is left with a craving for something more substantial and much more gourmet.

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Marc Ringel’s book, Accessing Medical Information from a Desert Island with Telephone Service: How to Get and Organize the Information You Need to Practice Most Effectively, is the result of the author’s experience as the director of the rural training program at North Colorado Family Medicine. The aim of this practical, user-friendly book is to assist physicians, physician assistants, nurses, residents, medical students, and other medical professionals to organize and gain access to clinical health sciences information sources.

The opening paragraph states the problem that is addressed in this book:

> We medical practitioners are all members of the service sector of the American economy. As service workers, information is by far the most important tool that we use in performing our jobs. Accessing and managing this information is one of the most daunting aspects of our work [p. vi].

Dr. Ringel’s book does not expound extensive new knowledge for meeting clinical information needs. It is instead a synthesis of practical how-to-do-it information for the busy clinician who needs to seek information when there is a patient waiting in the examination room. “The book will address meeting the information needs of the busy clinician, where efficiency (of time as well as cost) is of the utmost concern” (p. ix). Ringel presents a logical way of organizing the vast array of available medical information so that clinicians can answer, with the best information, the questions that often arise in daily practice.

The book is logically organized into four short, easy-to-read chapters. The chapters discuss a clinician’s primary sources of information: books, journals, electronic resources, and people. Each chapter addresses issues of availability, strengths, weaknesses, and organization to help decide what to purchase, what to browse, what to avoid, and whom to consult in order to practice the best medicine.


The “Journals and Personal Files” chapter briefly discusses a variety of selection ideas for the purchase of a journal. The author subsequently presents extremely basic but informative recommendations on how to select and read clinical journal articles. Suggestions range from choosing a good review article, which Ringel believes will best serve a clinician’s immediate information needs, to a detailed account of how to approach reading an article in the New England Journal of Medicine in order “to be ready to answer the questions of my better informed patients, who often have heard... of the week’s lead articles before I have torn the mailing sleeve off my copy of the cited issue” (p. 11). Half of the chapter describes how to set up a personal reference file. “Unless you are blessed with a photographic memory, it is barely worth reading journals if you do not keep a file of articles” (p. 15). The author describes his personal indexing system, down to the color coding of file labels. A “Quick Reference Files” section (also called a “Peripheral Brain” or an “Idiot’s