BOOK REVIEWS


These two new publications represent part of the continued effort by Doody Publishing to provide review information on new books in the health sciences in a manner that will be timely, consistent, independent, and reliable. These publications join and expand the reviews covered in the bimonthly Doody’s Health Sciences Book Review Journal. The views of both subject experts and librarians are represented by an Editorial Review Group, organized by subject area and chaired by physicians and other health sciences professionals, many from major medical centers in the Chicago area, and by a Library Board of Advisors, composed of librarians active in collection development and other areas.

Doody’s Health Sciences Book Review Annual lists 1,620 titles with a copyright year of 1993:826 of these have reviews by subject experts. Books are listed in the Annual on the basis of Doody Publishing having received a copy from the publisher. Ninety-seven publishers are represented. The Annual actively recruits professional societies that publish books, and ten societies participated in 1993 by sending copies of their books.

The volume is organized first by broad categories (basic sciences, clinical medicine, associated health professions, other disciplines), then by subject area. Nursing is not covered. The volume is indexed according to seven different categories, all of which are useful—the affiliation index is an excellent idea.

One word of caution: the title index includes initial articles in its filing, so books that begin with the words A or The are listed under those letters. This filing system should be reconsidered in the future, because it will probably confuse many users.

Descriptions and reviews of the material covered are very well done. A consistent format is used both for bibliographic information and for reviews. All 1,620 books contain a section, “Doody’s Notes,” offering information about audience, illustrations, notes about the authors and their affiliations, and other key information. Physical descriptions are thorough. The reviews utilize a format of consistent categories (description, purpose, audience, features, and assessment) along with a numeric rating system that expedites a good quick overview of the material.

In light of health sciences publishing overall for the year, the Annual probably covers somewhat less than 45% of the books published in the health sciences in 1993. For example, Majors Scientific Books lists 3,558 titles in its health sciences categories for 1993. At the Frederick L. Ehrman Library, New York University Medical Center, approximately 80% of all new books are received from Majors listings, so the true number of health sciences books being published would be even higher than the Majors number.

Contributing publishers to the Annual did not always send copies of everything they published in 1993. In order to assess coverage for its initial year of publication, an analysis of books purchased by the Frederick L. Ehrman Library in dermatology showed twenty-nine books with 1993 copyright dates. Of these twenty-nine, twenty (approximately 69%) were listed in the Annual. All twenty-nine titles were from the publishers on Doody’s list, however, so it is hoped that greater publisher compliance in the future will yield more complete listings in succeeding years. It would also be worthwhile to continue enlarging the list of contributing publishers. As a comparison, Majors Scientific Books lists 132 publishers in their Approval Plan Publishers List for 1993/94, compared to the 97 who participated in the Annual.

The 1,620 titles include many serials, including such annual publications as Annual Review of . . . (13 titles), Advances in . . . (17 titles), and Year Book of . . . (32 titles). Because many libraries, if they receive these titles at all, do so through standing orders, the value to library collection development of including these serials is questionable. Perhaps a good compromise would be to list and review only the first volumes of new annuals.

This is a first effort, so it is hoped that submissions from publishers will continue to increase to make the Annual a more complete record of publishing activity in the health sciences for a given year. Additionally, the existence of several years’ run can be beneficial both to readers of the literature and to those who seek to perform assessments over longer periods.

For the purposes of collection development, the primary question is, how important is this volume once selection has moved ahead to the new books in the new budget year? Another question would be, how important is it to have reviews available for only a portion of last year’s books? The answer lies in the Annual being able to inform us, for collection reviews and assessments, of important titles that may have been missed. It provides a handle by which to review the preceding year for one last time before moving on. It can also serve as a guide for those libraries that need to begin collecting in areas previously of low priority.
Overall, the Annual is recommended for those who frequently are called upon to offer opinions or reviews of particular works or to those who are involved with retrospective assessment of large areas of their collections. It would benefit large research centers at both academic medical centers and universities and would supplement rather than replace such sources of reviews as are published in the major medical weeklies; the New York Times; or the online Biomedical Libraries Acquisition Bulletin, which features reviews written by a network of interested collection development librarians. Libraries that purchase a copy may choose to shelve it in their reference area for patrons to consult. The price tag for the volume ($295.00) may be prohibitive for libraries without these needs or for the average hospital library.

Doody's Rating Service is a guide to 250 of the best health sciences books published in 1993. Books were chosen from input from Doody's reviewer network of eighty-five Editorial Review Group chairs and more than 600 reviewers; input from publishers, who were asked to select books they published that they considered the best or most innovative; a poll of 4,500 members of the Medical Library Association, asking for the top ten books of 1993; and a review of industry sales statistics.

What emerges is a volume that should receive wide use. Thorough descriptions, including expert assessments, of many of the best books published in 1993 will be of use to health sciences libraries of any size and to academic and public libraries. Because it deals with the year 1993 exclusively, this publication differs from the Brandon/Hill list and complements that list well. The bringing together of opinions from subject experts, librarians, and publishers is unique and deserves to be applauded, because these groups are not always known for cooperating with one another. As always, users of the list should be cautioned to consider their local situation when trying to determine any "best" list; for example, the fifth-most consulted book from 1993 at the Frederick L Ehrman Library is Wintrobe's Hematology, yet this book does not appear at all in the Rating Service volume.

At this writing, publisher Dan Doody is conducting market research with booksellers and librarians for possible enhancements to both of these products for 1995 editions to be published in April or May of 1995.

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As the AIDS epidemic continues into its second decade, the number of people involved in HIV/AIDS prevention and education increases. AIDS and HIV Programs and Services for Libraries addresses the role librarians can take as active participants in the fight against HIV infection and AIDS through the provision of information to members of the general public. Written by W. Bernard Lukenbill, associate professor of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Texas at Austin, this book seeks to "look critically at the information and educational issues that librarians must confront when they are faced with providing appropriate resources, services, and programs for a wide variety of people who are or will be seeking help from them" (Introduction). These issues include the use of nontraditional formats, the way in which libraries and librarians are viewed by other groups involved in AIDS-related activities, the importance of communication, and the work of other organizations in HIV/AIDS education and prevention programs. Topics are discussed in eleven concise, well-organized chapters that cover theoretical aspects of the issues, analysis of related research, examples of existing library-related programs and services, and practical suggestions for action by the author.

The opening chapters contain an overview of theories and issues relating to the social aspect of HIV infection and a discussion of HIV/AIDS information provision by libraries and other groups. Research in the fields of library science, psychology, sociology, education, and other related areas is discussed. Contents focus on the different roles of libraries as public-health consumer-information providers, extension and outreach agencies, and other organizations involved in HIV/AIDS information provision. Other chapters discuss libraries' roles in providing HIV/AIDS information and their programs and campaigns are described, and a list of what libraries can do to involve themselves in these activities is presented.

The chapter entitled "HIV/AIDS Information: Resources and Delivery Systems" contains two main sections: an overview of sources for HIV/AIDS information and a discussion of information delivery systems. Although these sections are not meant to be comprehensive in their coverage or scope, they are helpful as a summary of the major resources for HIV/AIDS information. They also reinforce the importance of nontraditional materials such as art, comic books,