

contribution. This is an introduction to what he recognizes to be an underdeveloped field; it is also a very conservative introduction. For example, it ends with sketches of three attitudes toward technology, "ancient skepticism," "enlightenment optimism," and "romantic uneasiness." No hint of anything post-modern here. And while Mitcham is head of the Science, Technology, and Society Program at Pennsylvania State University, there is not much society in this book, nor much attention to sociotechnical systems, nor to the material and social infrastructure that technologies create and in which our lives are embedded. (Concentration on technology as production and use of individual artifacts makes it easier to neglect sociotechnical systems.) For that we may have to look to some new field of technology studies. Nevertheless, Mitcham's book can be a useful starting point for a newcomer to the questions concerning technology.—Patrick Wilson, *University of California, Berkeley*.

Branscomb, Anne W. *Who Owns Information? From Privacy to Public Access*. New York: Basic, 1994. 241p. \$25 (ISBN 0-465-09175-X).

Anne Wells Branscomb, a legal scholar-in-residence at the Harvard Program on Information Resources Policy, is an expert on high-tech intellectual property. In *Who Owns Information? From Privacy to Public Access*, she authoritatively discusses how "electronic-mediated information" has been dealt with in "three areas of the law—First Amendment rights, intellectual property rights, and privacy rights," with the thrust of the analysis on the second area. Though unmentioned in the title or subtitle, Branscomb's primary focus is on computers and digital information. She makes no claim to survey this expanding field exhaustively; for example, she mentions music only in passing and architects' blueprints not at all.

The bulk of the book consists of choppy microchapters on topics or cases involving different kinds of personal information and the video and computer

industries. In each the author jumps into the subject *in medias res* with a dramatized narrative to particularize the issue. The astute reader learns to jump over the journalese to the analytical background that sets forth the pertinent considerations at play in the illustrative case. This inconsistent treatment, along with the gee-whiz introduction to such high-tech entities as "electronic laser beams" or telemarketers' "800 WATS lines," makes for a schizophrenic work that cannot make up its mind whether to address the technical legal/computer questions or to appeal to an impressionable wider audience.

Branscomb does not limit herself strictly to digital data; the most cohesive chapter—on the Dead Sea Scrolls—involves computers only peripherally, as she acknowledges. This chapter—said to be on "religious information" but dealing more centrally with the control and sharing of scholarly data and knowledge—touches on issues of plagiarism; this term is absent from her text, but the problems she discusses relate to analogous conflicts (unmentioned here) that are besetting other fields of scholarship. Similarly, Branscomb does not acknowledge that the Reagan administration's restrictive information policy was not limited to electronic media, as any ALA member would well know. Her occasional discussion of nondigital information makes it difficult to understand why she does not make similar connections in other cases.

Despite the intermittent dumbing-down of the prose, Branscomb presents a series of serviceable state-of-the-question surveys. The references to the literature seem, with the possible exception of the chapter on the Dead Sea Scrolls, mostly limited to what can be found on Lexis/Nexis: largely, the extremes of case law and articles in the popular press. The reader's confidence in her scholarship is a little shaken, however, when *Fantasia* video sales are documented, not as would be expected by a reference to a trade journal, but to one of those anthology news summaries that pop up in Nexis keyword searches. In this instance concerning *Fantasia*, a cita-

tion to "Woman Fends Off Naked Attacker with Umbrella; First to Arrive on Freeway Accident Scene Was No Good Samaritan" was perhaps left in as a joke by an indulgent editor.

Branscomb's central message is that both the technology and the law are in flux, a fact that inevitably limits the time-value of her book. Already later developments supersede her text: on the issue of medical privacy involving the unique case of the Florida dentist alleged to have infected his patients with AIDS, information has since come out that the apparent victims had other possible exposures to the virus. Admittedly this information was developed by insurance company investigators with an interest in feeding the disclosures to CBS-TV's *60 Minutes*. Similarly, within a month of Branscomb's signing the acknowledgments of this book, the SEC's EDGAR database was opened to the Internet, in part through the advocacy of the Nader-associated Taxpayers Assets Project—an eventuality still in contention when she wrote her chapter on government information.

In the key chapter—on computer software—Branscomb alleges the growing inadequacy of the current system based on copyright, patents, and trades secrets, and proposes "an entirely new paradigm," arguing that "it might be more appropriate to think in terms of information assets rather than intellectual property." But these "assets" are not defined in distinctive contrast with such "property." What she proposes is in fact a combination of existing measures including statutory secrecy limits of from five to twelve years, coupled with the possible use of compulsory licensing. Branscomb's brave new paradigm does not stray far from the marketplace, though the limits of her parameters are made explicit only in her last chapter, in which she suggests "we grant information—not just personal information—the full protection of property laws."

Branscomb concludes with an exhortation to clarify and define a social consensus on electronic information and to join in the legislative process of doing so. In the legislative process that she

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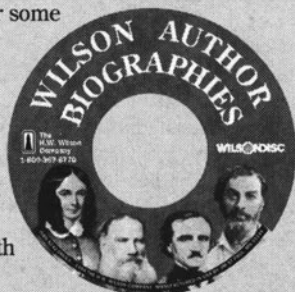
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envisions only individual citizens seem to participate meaningfully. After the display of so much legal expertise, her call for individual participation appears somewhat ingenuous, as she acknowledges the power of "powerful vested interests" and their lobbies only once. Disagreement with her conclusion need not, however, preclude librarians' using her analytic surveys of topics that are of great interest to librarians and other information professionals.—Jeffry Larson, *Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.*

Rossman, Parker. *The Emerging World-wide Electronic University: Information Age Global Higher Education.* Westport Conn.: Greenwood, 1993. 176p. \$17.95 (ISBN 0-275-94776-9).

The elements of this volume's vision of the future are mostly familiar. It comprises on one hand the expectations of the electronic zealot who expects a networked world to transform information processing and education totally, and on the other hand the internationalist's commitment to advancing the interests of humankind through broadly collaborative international projects. The author is "Vice-President of the Global Systems Analysis and Simulation Project (GLOSAS/USA) and Chair of the GLOSAS/Global University-Long-Range Planning Committee." This project goes back twenty years and at the time of writing (1991) had still not offered an actual course internationally; a veronica search of gopherspace finds that the enterprise is active but cannot confirm that

it is actually offering courses. It sponsored, for example, the first international conference on distance learning ever held in Moscow this past summer.

The volume is not, however, hostage to the fortunes of the author's enterprises. It is a creditable journalistic survey of recent (at the time of writing) discussion of the possibilities for creating broad-based educational enterprises running beyond national boundaries. The particular synergy it seeks arises out of the power of electronic information to forge links between geographically remote locations and the political commitment to create such links in the first place. The faith that the work represents is a familiar mix of the internationalist and the peace activist. A fair amount of what is mentioned is vaporware, and the intellectual and cultural contexts are slightly disconcerting (e.g., H. G. Wells fantasizing about the "World Brain"). Soothing buzzwords (the Pacific rim, lifelong learning) are regularly heard. The basis in reality is fairly slight: a sense of economic pressures is only lightly present, and I find no discussion of intellectual property laws and the commercialization of electronic information and how that might affect the pious daydreams here. The chapter on "Connecting the World's Research Libraries" contains fresh material of interest to all those who have not yet heard of or familiarized themselves with the workings of OCLC, but to few others.—James J. O'Donnell, *University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*

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