whatever they are; just how much is highlighted in Joy Thomas's survey/article on the attitudes of people who have served recently as president of a state or local association. Many of these people had no clerical support and sacrificed valuable personal and financial resources to serve, out of a pure sense of duty. This speaks well for the profession. Another well-written article is Cindy Mediavilla's piece on the role of the California Library Association in fighting anti-Communist censorship between 1946 and 1956. Also noteworthy is Sue Kamm's survey of why librarians choose to join associations (for networking, receipt of publications, opportunity to contribute to the profession, and so on). Other pieces march though topics such as the role of staff versus volunteer in associations and the value that associations have in individuals' careers.

William Fisher's "The Value of Professional Associations" comes to the remarkable conclusion that "without such associations of which they become officers, without professional association conferences at which they attend and/or deliver papers and go to meetings, and without professional association publications of which they become editors, reviewers, and/or authors, library directors would have to devote more of their time to the day-to-day running of their libraries. If they exist for no better reason than to keep library directors busy, our professional associations play an important role." If this flippant and outrageous insult to the altruistic sacrifices of so many people constitutes a valid conclusion to one of the volume's think pieces, one can only wonder where *Library Trends* is headed.—*William Miller, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton.*

Edward R. Tufte. *Visual Explanations: Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative.* Cheshire, Conn.: Graphics Pr., 1997. 156p. $45 (postpaid from author/publisher) (ISBN 0-9613921-2-6). LC 97-127584.

This is Edward Rolf Tufte's third self-published, self-distributed, and self-promoted book on representing information. Whatever one thinks of this trilogy, it is, collectively, one of the more interesting footnotes in the history of late twentieth-century publishing. As venerable old houses increasingly find themselves in the bellies of much larger beasts, as mega-media groups form and reform like giant protoplasma, there remains Edward Tufte. A professor of engineering at Yale, he is a publishing phenomenon of his own. I am unaware of any other academic who has been as successful as Tufte in putting out his own corpus.

I will not pretend to account for Tufte's popularity; it perplexes me as much as Umberto Eco's. To be sure, each of his books is handsomely designed and lovingly made, illustrative of the principles it communicates. But packaging goes only so far. I first encountered Tufte years ago in a smart-looking ad in the *New Yorker.* The fact that the ad was (a) handsome and (b) in the *New Yorker* was (for me, anyway) persuasive. I ordered a copy of *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information,* even though I did not have the remotest interest in the topic.

Whatever the reasons, one thing is certain: In this current age of the interface, where everyone is his or her own Web master, Tufte's work is timely and relevant. Like most everyone else, librarians spend large chunks of time huddled before screens filled with words, numbers, icons, bars, colors, and anything else that can be made to fit the space. We admire their occasional elegance, and we scream at their all-too-frequent indifference to design. Moreover, librarians are not only information specialists and managers, they also are information designers. Although trained to manage information, librarians are not trained to present it visually. This is why Tufte is worth consulting. He is clear, straightforward, witty, and opinionated. He will give some context and guidelines for thinking about

the ways in which screens should be organized. All OPAC committees should be required to read him.

The present book is about ways to represent change effectively: "design strategies—the proper arrangement in space and time of images, words, and numbers—for presenting information about motion, process, mechanism, cause and effect." If anyone balks at the prescriptive tone of this, Tufte quickly provides examples of how the presentation of information can be a matter of life and death. It was, he argues, the effective representation of data that allowed Dr. John Snow to halt an outbreak of deadly cholera in mid-nineteenth-century London. And it was the artless representation of data that contributed decisively to the NASA Challenger disaster in 1986. "There are displays that reveal the truth and displays that do not."

Happily, most of the book is not nearly so portentous. Indeed, Tufte, like God and the devil, lives amidst the details. From that perspective, visual clutter is one of his favorite targets. Clutter results from a democratic approach to text and context, information and background. Fine as a political ideal, democracy has no place in effective design, which demands hierarchy and unequal emphases. But those emphases need not be glaring. Often the smallest and subtlest variations will yield the most satisfying results.

Tufte ranges widely for insight and example, from weather charts to Humphrey Repton's landscapes and the art of Ad Reinhardt. After a while, it becomes difficult to distinguish art from science. Thus, my favorite "display" in the book is the extraordinary "cyclogram" concocted by two Russian cosmonauts to record a continuous narrative of the flight of their Salyut 6 space mission. Mounted on any museum wall, it would seem a perfectly obvious piece of twentieth-century book art! A chapter on magic focuses on the contradiction within the practice of magic. The magician deceives; he is the master of disinformation. On the other hand, the magician also must be the master of clarity in presenting information about the craft to apprentices. There is much to be learned from the strategies of disinformation.

Librarians may find the final chapter the most helpful to their own work. It considers "confectionery designs," that is, representations that seek to capture complex processes and narrative within the frame of a single constellation of images. Examples of confectionery designs include frontispieces to seventeenth-century books, twentieth-century collage art, and contemporary computer screens. "Like perspective, confections give the mind an eye. Confections place selected, diverse images into the narrative context of a coherent argument. And, by virtue of the coherence of their arguments, confections make reading and seeing and thinking identical." This collapsing of cognitive processes in response to a single representation strikes me as a sensible goal for computer interfaces. It also nods appropriately to the potential of the computer for altering modes of perception and patterns of attention.

Tufte is an engineer, not an artist. His aesthetic preferences can at times be dull, at other times idiosyncratic. But it was one the century's greatest architects, Le Corbusier, who urged his colleagues to pay attention to the ways in which engi-

neers worked. The clarity, simplicity, and economy of their designs would be the signal characteristics of twentieth-century design. After this, my third excursion into the worlds of Edward Tufte, I am prepared to concede Le Corbusier his point.—*Michael Ryan, University of Pennsylvania.*

Information Imagineering: Meeting at the Interface. Eds. Milton T. Wolf, Pat Ensor, and Mary Augusta Thomas, for the Library and Information Technology Association and the Library Administration and Management Association. Chicago and London: ALA, 1998. 255p. $36, alk. paper (ISBN 0-8389-0729-6). LC 97-44296.

Librarians should not let the title of this book fool them: There are no Disneyesque flights of fancy here. There is no attempt "to promote the imaginative forecasting and planning for future information systems and technologies by the examination and analysis of science fiction themes and works," as the LITA interest group was charged to do. What is here is a book with both feet figuratively on the ground. So, readers beware: Anyone seeking a pragmatic introduction to some of the issues and challenges he or she is and will be facing on the road to the digital/virtual library will find this book useful. However, anyone seeking a grandiose vision of what that future will look like and what his or her daily routines will be like will find this book of little value.

The editors sought to compile a collection of essays from a variety of perspectives (library, museum, academic department, archives, information specialist) to find out what the latest technologies "were doing to us and for us." These essays are arranged into six sections: (1) Retooling for the Future; (2) Technology Serves; (3) From Print to Pixels; (4) Redefining Our Information Institutions; (5) Visioning the New Organization; and (6) A Mirror Held Up to Tomorrow.

Indeed, the subjects are varied, if predictable and conservatively argued. (In forecasting, one contributor warned, caution is in order.) We have the "how we do it good in my library" article, which is actually an excellent chronicle documenting the introduction of a NT client-server library network. We have the entry that reminds us that people are the key, not technology. There is the shared vision thing. There are essays that discuss how team learning is the key to the future. Another entry talks about the major misconception that computer people and book people are antagonists. We read why digital collections and print collections will coexist.

Though varied, the predominant theme is collections, be they journal, book, or artifact. One writer takes this to the point of questioning the past massive retrospective conversion projects. Perhaps they were ill-advised and should have been done gradually because our time, efforts, and dollars could have been better spent in other ways, specifically, to create local collections or access to journal indexes. Maybe so, but any librarian who has worked with split local catalogs will attest to the fact that a single catalog is ideal for users.

Because of the focus on collections, and the administrative and intellectual issues attached to them, it is the library user who is barely visible in these pages. Sue Myburgh does have a subheading in her chapter, "Pity the Poor End User," and it is not surprising that her solution to the woes of the current searcher is a return to the librarian as an intermediary. (I say "not surprising" because the terms *instruction, bibliographic instruction, library instruction,* or *user instruction* do not appear in the book's index.) The other missing element is the public library. Only Howard Besser reflects on the issues facing public libraries in the midst of his fascinating analysis on how current commercial and marketing trends and transformations need to be considered in our planning.