sues. This effort will not satisfy librarians but will be useful to academic administrators grappling with the general issues the papers in this compilation consider.

This is a sometimes enlightening, frequently muddled, and often insightful collection that should be available in any research library collection. Above all, it is a provocative case of special pleading for one possible alternative future for American higher education. It is a suitable companion volume to the more conceptually integrated work of Sheila Slaughter and Larry L. Leslie, *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Pr., 1997, reviewed in *C&RL,* vol. 59, no. 3*).—Lee Shiflett, Louisiana State University.*

Social Dimensions of Information Technology: Issues for the New Millennium. Ed. G. David Garson. Hershey, Penn.: Idea Group, 2000. 362p., $79.95 paper (ISBN 1-878-28986-1). LC 99-88003.

When Daniel Bell published *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* in 1973, he created almost overnight a sense not only among many social scientists, but also in much of society at large, that the world had radically and inalterably changed. The end of the industrial age and the advent of something new—then as yet ill defined only as "post-industrial"—resulted from what Bell called the new "intellectual technologies" developing around the computer. Founding a paradigm that echoes loudly even today, Bell held that these technologies were dramatically discontinuous with all earlier information-processing and management systems. If let blossom, they would result in a new age of progress and wealth invalidating and transcending all the laws of political economy.

Since these heady first years of the information age, comparable in their boundless optimism to the short-lived "Atomic Age" of the 1950s and 60s, sociologists, political economists, and, of course, members of the many new "knowledge professions" (among whom may or may not be librarians) have all

been asking whether postindustrial society has indeed superseded what went before. Bill Gates and other utopians, of course, encourage us to answer this question with a full-throated yes! Less starry-eyed (or self-interested?) contemporaries, among them the presiding judge in U.S. v. Microsoft, Thomas Penfield Jackson, see in the commodification of information and the rapid advance of computer networks as delivery systems for this new merchandise just the latest expansion of the marketplace—one that has created the most extraordinarily productive site for capital accumulation in history, but which, for that very reason, requires intense government scrutiny. In this view, the emphasis on "discontinuity" is just a smoke screen for those seeking profit, and the old laws and criticisms of unbridled capitalism still apply with no less stringency than when other breakthrough technologies became "commodified" in the past, among them the steam locomotive, the automobile, and the telephone.

So do we stand at the dawn of a great new age, or is it business as usual? Or, to ask a subsidiary question relevant to most readers of these pages: Are we librarians and the institutions we maintain likely victims of these changes—comparable to the port towns along the Ohio or Mississippi that became ghost towns when the new railways began to route commerce past them, or is it just a matter of adapting our practices and services to the new technological realities within an unchanged societal mandate? We count on sociologists to help us gain some quasi-historical distance from the present even as we are experiencing it, and it was therefore with some hope of enlightenment—reinforced by the immoderate subtitle "Issues for the New Millennium"— that this reviewer turned to the collection of essays gathered together here.

The volume's editor, G. David Garson, perhaps a bit too fulsomely introduced in the biographical notes as the author or editor of more than twenty books and fifty articles, is also the editor of *Social Science Computer Review*, where all twenty articles

of the present book were first published. Despite a relatively high institutional subscription rate of more than $230 per year for this quarterly, *Social Science Computer Review* is widely held in North American academic libraries, with a total circulation of about a thousand. Further, its articles are indexed in several important electronic sources that researchers and students regularly turn to, including *INSPEC* and the *Social Sciences Citations Index*. Presumably, the subscribing institutions would be the same ones that might otherwise be interested in a collection of essays under such a title, but they own this information already. Nonsubscribing libraries can obtain the same articles on demand for their users. What, then, justifies the reissue of these essays—or chapters as they are called here—in the form of a monographic publication? Are they perhaps so fundamental that they deserve a more permanent form than that provided in the *Social Science Computer Review*? No. As it turns out, most are snapshots of contemporary research, well suited perhaps for publication in a journal, but even after having been brushed up slightly for republication still by no means seminal, nor intended by their authors to be such. Among the more interesting articles in this collection are those by Mark A. Shields on computer-based instruction ("Technological Change, Virtual Learning, and Higher Education") and John P. Robinson, Meyer Kestnbaum, and Andrew Kohut on the extent to which PC use has displaced other leisure activities ("Personal Computers, Mass Media, and Other Uses of Free Time"). These and a number of the other articles convey significant research and insights. But to an extent even greater than in most collections of this type, the high standard they set is not maintained throughout.

Indeed, for the purposes of this review, it is especially unfortunate that the one essay in the collection that deals with the future of libraries directly, "Changing Roles in Information Dissemination and Education," is exasperatingly superficial (two books by pop info science author Neil Postman and a 1984 issue of *Network World* are the only sources cited), poorly reasoned, and atrociously written and edited. If this judgment sounds too harsh, here is a brief sample that might stand for many others: "So, what then should the Library publish one [sic] the WWW? The Library cannot of course scan all of it's [sic] books and other materials into machine-readable form and make them available on their [sic] WWW site for reasons of money, time, and above all, copyright."

Another reason that might justify republication in monographic form might be to facilitate course adoption at a college or university, but at $80, the price of this paperback volume is much too high.

Perhaps the publishers felt that the value of the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, and, indeed, this is what characterizes and justifies any good collection of essays, carefully assembled and introduced by an editor illuminating a large and complex topic from a host of complementary perspectives. But the essays gathered here rarely talk to one another (nor, again, have they been asked to), as illustrated by a slapdash three-page index in which we find not only nebulous rubrics such as "social dimensions," "server problems," "persuasiveness,"

"world system," and "boundaryless organization" (with but a single-page reference each), but also, inexcusably, separate entries for "e-mail" and "electronic mail," "World Wide Web" and "Web," "mass media" and "national media," all pointing in completely different directions. This speaks of haste and indifference on the part of both editor and publisher.

In sum, and for all sympathy with the authors of certain of the essays republished here, this book has little to recommend it, adding a line to a vita somewhere, but otherwise only to the glut of redundantly published materials libraries have to choose from.

Perhaps before closing, let me add as a historical footnote that one of the earliest critical works on the social impact of information technology remains today one of the best, even twelve years after publi-

cation. In 1988, Canadian sociologist Vincent Mosco and his U.S. collaborator, media expert Janet Wasko, published fourteen original essays under the title *The Political Economy of Information* (Wisconsin), including two superb introductory overviews by Mosco ("Information in the Pay-Per Society") and Dan Schiller, now of U.C.-San Diego ("How To Think about Information"), and numerous other exciting contributions. Among other things, this reader had a comprehensive list of referenced authors (e.g., "Habermas, J., 23, 69, 73, 247-48, 272-73") in addition to a six-page hierarchical subject index with cross-references (e.g. "Panopticon, see Surveillance") to help its readers pull everything together. It is herewith commended to the careful attention of the editor and the publisher of the present volume.—*Jeffrey Garrett, Northwestern University.*