

the promise of radio and television before them, can and probably will be compromised and controlled by commercial forces, if only because individuals and local groups cannot afford to maintain the whiz-bang, high-production-value presentations we have come to expect.

Ultimately, Doheny-Farina counsels community activism and touts "Neigh-Nets," "the next step beyond the Free-Net in the evolution of community nets." The Neigh-Net can be used to welcome new neighbors, market baby-sitting services, support neighborhood businesses, publicize local events, and "debate local issues, from taxes to traffic to crime to politics."

Throughout his book, Doheny-Farina, an associate professor at Clarkson University, contrasts the cold and somewhat culturally barren character of his home with the seductive, but ultimately evil, bright lights of the big city, and by analogy, contrasts the down-to-earth community activism he counsels with the seductive, but ultimately misguided, desire to flee the provinces for the big city. He prizes his hard-fought achievement in becoming a part of his environment and counsels others to do the same. "The net . . . is a seductive electronic specter. Take part in it not to connect to the world but to connect to your city, your town, your neighborhood."—*William Miller, Florida Atlantic University.*

Megill, Kenneth. *The Corporate Memory: Information Management in the Electronic Age.* London: Bowker-Saur (Information Services Management, 6), 1997. 112p. \$50, alk. paper (ISBN 1-85739-158-6). LC 96-43103.

This is a slight volume with a large scope. In a mere one hundred and twelve pages, Kenneth Megill summarizes the contributions of the three interrelated fields of records manage-

ment, special librarianship, and archives to the management of corporate information systems; and he charts a new course for information systems in the face of shifting technological and managerial patterns. Megill, director of the Information Resources Management Program within the School of Library and Information Science at Catholic University, begins with two basic premises: (1) The advent of electronic data systems is radically changing the way information is used by corporations, and (2) changes from within and without corporations require new ways of maintaining the information that makes up corporate memories. These new ways involve an integration of activities currently divided among records managers, archivists, librarians, and computer personnel. Megill argues that traditional paper systems are giving way to online systems with shared databases. The role of the corporate memory manager will be to identify appropriate data, make them available through networks, and provide indexes and search mechanisms. Instead of historical files in one centralized location, there will be historical data residing alongside newly generated data in an ongoing and online system.

The concept of corporate memory is defined as the active and historical information in an organization that is worth sharing, managing, and preserving for later reuse. Traditionally, this information has resided in the experiences and knowledge of individual employees or in the thousands of documents produced in the course of business. Megill argues that the development of computer networks and shared databases, the increased recognition of information as a commodity, and shifting employment patterns have long-term repercussions for the field of information management. Further, the nature of corporate structures is undergoing a fundamental change, moving away from top-down hierarchies. In particular, he

sees the role of middle managers moving away from controlling or limiting information and toward coordinating and adding value.

The strength of this book lies in its clear synthesis of records management issues and descriptions of technological changes in the workplace. Included are discussions on records retention policies; analysis of information use; explanations of relational and inverted index systems, SGML, the Internet and the World Wide Web, and scripts; and descriptions of training programs. Although Megill openly acknowledges that portions of the book are based on Carlos A. Cuadra's *The Corporate Memory and the Bottom Line* (1994) and a paper presented by Judith Wanger at the Online Conference in 1995, he also provides an excellent summary of a wide range of recent research. Moreover, he presents cogent arguments for an integrated approach to documentation while acknowledging the contributions already made by the separate disciplines of records management, archives, and library science. However, the concept of documentation strategy used here relies more on standard records retention appraisals than on the perspective of archival documentation outlined in Helen Samuels's *Varsity Letters: Documenting Modern Colleges and Universities* (1992). Annotated bibliographies at the end of each chapter offer practical pointers to more detailed histories and analyses, and highlighted sections give easy access to statistics on the costs of lost documents and to useful summaries of records concepts.

The weakest points of the book are the attempts to provide practical guidance in appraisal and in starting corporate memory programs. The discussion of rules of worth remains at the level of an overview and is too conditional to truly assist in the design of viable retention periods. The suggestions for starting a program include interviewing key employees (who may work at any or all levels of the current corpo-

rate structure); bringing search engines to current stored electronic data; creating systems to capture and index electronic documents; and developing imaging systems. These suggestions are indeed useful starting points, but the descriptions are insufficient as guidelines for planning their implementation.

Ultimately, the usefulness of this work will be in its presentation of current issues and the accessibility of Megill's arguments for rethinking corporate records issues. It is particularly appropriate for records managers, archivists, and librarians faced with persuading information-illiterate corporate or institutional personnel to change or implement records policies.—*Jan Blodgett, Davidson College.*

Sardar, Ziauddin, and Jerome R. Ravetz.

Cyberfutures: Culture and Politics on the Information Superhighway. New York: New York Univ. Pr., 1996. 161p. \$45, cloth (ISBN 0-8147-8059-8); \$16.95, paper (ISBN 0-8147-8058-X). LC 96-19794.

Rising from academic obscurity in the space of just a few years, the Internet is fast becoming a public information system of global proportions. That this has occurred rather rapidly is an understatement; it is as if "the telephone, television, and the private automobile had all developed simultaneously, and in a matter of months rather than decades." We must ask how this new technology will affect culture and society in the years to come, but it is an arduous task, the editors claim. In fact, according to the editors, in the grip of Internet technological enthusiasm and hype, it is all but impossible to come to any sensible conclusions about the Internet's future—the volume's ostensible topic. So the editors abandon this project at the beginning, preferring, instead, to unpack the "underlying assumptions and values of the cyberspace revolution that is unfolding before our eyes." They offer this collection of essays to