proposal: The best way to do content description would be to describe informative potentials. In that form, it clearly parallels the proposal, which has been around for years, to describe content by predicting subjective utilities of documents (which the author oddly does not discuss, though it obviously provides another striking case of subjectivism to be opposed by methodological collectivism.) In that form, of course, it is subject to the objection that prediction of future epistemological or informative potentials is bound to be excruciatingly difficult, made all the more so by the author's insistence on long-range as opposed to short-range utilities (he rejects "short-term pragmatism," which he blames on William James). And it is oddly optimistic to suppose that many documents now produced actually have any future utility or informational value for solving future scientific problems. So Hjørland's proposal faces very serious challenges. Despite this, however, it is a major proposal, an addition to the small repertory of serious alternative approaches to content description, and deserves to be reflected on and worked over carefully by others.

Some of the other proposals, such as the advocacy of domain analysis, are less controversial. Every good subject specialist in a research library practices an informal kind of domain analysis simply by accumulating knowledge of the bibliography of a field, of its literature patterns and types, its intellectual leaders and centers of activity, and the like. Many of Hjørland's proposals will sound intuitively plausible to the subject specialist. The emphasis on the philosophically pragmatic foundation of the proposals probably will seem attractive as well; activity theory is not described in enough detail to provide really solid backing, and in effect is treated as a Russian version of John Dewey's approach. The whole direction of this work will make sense to those familiar with the literature on the sociology of knowledge and, in particular, the sociology of scientific knowledge and of social epistemology.

However, a big question remains. Hjørland starts by proposing that information seeking is the key problem for information science but then concentrates exclusively on literature searching by research workers. What about information seeking by others? What about information seeking that does not take the form of literature search? As one works through this book, it appears that the author really does think that information science has as its subject matter primarily, or exclusively, the research use of literature. The study of information use by others is apparently to be left to others—for example, students of the mass media. This seems a quite unnecessary limitation on the scope of information science, for which the author presents no convincing argument. We should ignore this limitation, but we should welcome methodological collectivism and apply it widely to the study of knowledge and of information production, distribution, and utilization.—*Patrick Wilson, University of California-Berkeley.*

Outsourcing Library Technical Services Operations: Practices in Academic, Public, and Special Libraries. Eds. Karen A. Wilson and Marylou Colver. Chicago: ALA, 1997. 239p. $38 ($34.20 ALA members) (ISBN 0-8389-0703-2). LC 97-22901.

Published by ALA, this volume was issued under the sponsorship of the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services's Commercial Technical Services Committee whose members in 1995 ". . . were aware of the lack of published case studies on technical services outsourcing in the 1990s. . . . This book was conceived to provide readers with greater insight on the managerial aspects of outsourcing, based on a variety of successful experiences in different kinds of library settings." The introduction and

various chapters within the work remind us that outsourcing is not a new concept; shelf-ready book services have existed since the 1950s and blanket order plans have been in widespread use since the 1960s. The preface states that the recent interest ". . . is evidenced by the fact that over 90 articles on various aspects of technical services outsourcing appeared in library literature from 1993 to mid-1996, preceded by almost no information on this activity during the two previous decades." Nowhere is mention made that the outpouring of current literature followed Wright State University's decision to outsource its entire cataloging operation. Although this is not a flaw per se, failure to mention the controversy that surrounds outsourcing within the profession ignores important context.

Despite its subtitle, the bulk of the work, eleven of sixteen chapters, is composed of reports from academic libraries. Three chapters describe public library ventures, and two discuss cases from special libraries. The nature and scope of the projects described are as eclectic as the institutions from which they emanate, although the majority are concerned with the outsourcing of cataloging and cataloging-related activity. The smallest operation reported on was that of Central Oregon Community College Library, where the fewer than fifty items per year that require original cataloging are outsourced. Claremont Colleges have outsourced the copy cataloging of approval books from Yankee Book Peddler to OCLC TechPro since 1994; and the University of Arizona began to outsource the copy cataloging, item record creation, and physical processing of its approval books from Blackwell North America in 1996. North of the border, the University of Alberta has outsourced the cataloging and physical processing of most newly acquired monographs since 1995, whereas the University of Manitoba started to outsource copy cataloging and the physical processing of monographs

in 1994 and expanded its contract to include original cataloging in 1996. Both of the Canadian schools employ ISM/LTS (information systems management/library technical services). The University of California-Santa Barbara and Emory University used outsourcing for retrospective authority control and continue to use it for current authority control. Florida Atlantic University has used OCLC TechPro to catalog music scores and foreign language materials which otherwise would have remained in a backlog.

The Fort Worth Public Library uses five different vendors for its various outsourcing operations. Outsourced activities include copy cataloging and physical processing as well as selection, cataloging, and physical processing for all best-sellers and children's books. The Houston Public Library outsources physical processing, copy cataloging, and authority control. Baker & Taylor, Inc., has supplied shelf-ready books for three new branches (each with collections of around 35,000 volumes) of the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Public Library System.

An interesting exception to the case studies on cataloging was the description of the outsourcing of document delivery and table of contents service by Stanford University's Graduate School of Business Library. Also of interest were two reports from institutions that chose alternatives to outsourcing. At the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, staff were given the option to be hired for overtime work to process a special collection. The Indiana Historical Society hired a retired employee for part-time work instead of outsourcing a job. In both instances, the projects were finite and the use of staff who were familiar with institutional procedures was judged to be advantageous.

Certain common themes emerged in the case studies reported. The most frequent reason stated for outsourcing was the need to maintain or expand services with no increase in monies. Several writers

mentioned that staff were reassigned from technical to public service positions as a result of outsourcing. Everyone indicated the need for careful planning in advance and for periodic evaluations. In gauging the success of outsourced work, several authors granted that no figures existed for making certain comparisons. A surprising number of institutions lack data on cataloging error rates, turnaround time from order to shelf for new acquisitions, and so on.

More appendices outlining contract specifications would have strengthened the case studies and provided potential assistance to those who are anticipating the outsourcing of some operations. The book was intended to present case studies of successful outsourcing, however; and this purpose was fulfilled. The text proper is followed by an annotated bibliography. Included are almost 125 citations to materials that present both the negative and positive aspects of outsourcing. Anyone with an interest in the subject will find this work a useful addition to the literature.—*James W. Williams, University of Illinois-Urbana.*

Radway, Janice A. *A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire.* Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Pr., 1997. 424p. alk. paper, $29.95 (ISBN 0-8078-2357-0). LC 96-52037.

Janice A. Radways's first book, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*, dared to take seriously one of the most despised genres of mass fiction and to listen to the voices of real readers. Those were the days when popular culture was still unmentionable in many English departments. In this new project, Radway tackles a tamer, but more ambiguous, subject: the Book of the Month Club and the middlebrow culture it both reflected and promoted. She seems determined to repeat her earlier triumphant vindication of reading matter scorned by highbrow critics. But times have changed

since 1984. Attacking the modernist canon, validating the reader's desires, interpreting the economic, social, and psychological meanings of cultural texts—all this is old hat today. Radway acknowledges her uncertainty about what she herself describes as a work of self-discovery whose focus "oscillates continually between critique and appreciation."

A Feeling for Books consists of three sections, each with a distinctive subject matter and methodology. It begins with a field study of the Book of the Month Club organization that Radway undertook in 1985 as part of an "ethnographic" study of reading. She recounts her impressions of the club's editors as they responded to a takeover by Time Incorporated. The second and longest section uses a more detached, scholarly approach to survey the history of publishing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the rise of the Book of the Month Club, and responses to it. In conclusion, Radway offers personal interpretations of several club titles she read as a fourteen year old: *Marjorie Morningstar; Gods, Graves, and Scholars;* and *To Kill a Mockingbird.*

When the well-read advertising man Harry Scherman launched the Book of the Month Club in 1926, he knew exactly what he was doing. He applied modern techniques of marketing and distribution to bookselling to "sell new books as an identifiable category with recognizable uses for potential buyers." The books were selected by a carefully chosen panel of judges who were presented as both experts and generalists. The ingenious "negative option," which allowed readers to reject a book, enabled the club to maintain an illusion of freedom and individuality. (The irrepressible Scherman described readers' rejection of a chosen title thus: "The country didn't want *The Heart of Emerson's Journals*; they didn't want any part of Emerson's journals.") The number of subscribers quickly stabilized at a million. By the 1950s, the club had become a cultural icon, subject of an