

from the information practices of other European states: by noting differences as well as similarities, he is able to bring out the specific features of Colbert's system. He also impressively marshals a wide array of primary sources—particularly published and unpublished papers from Colbert's archives—to provide specific examples of the information practices he is analyzing: these examples are, as a rule, well chosen and to the point. As regards style of exposition, Soll has constructed a narrative whose structure is generally clear and well articulated—no small achievement given the multifaceted nature of the subject he is treating: furthermore, he writes with assurance and verve, making the book a pleasure to read. The book is thoroughly documented—no less than 100 of its 277 pages are given over to endnotes and bibliography—and its judiciously selected illustrations—10 figures in all—give the reader vivid visual representations of Colbert and his world of paperwork, while its index is quite serviceable, if somewhat uneven in the quality of its execution.

Needless to say, no book is ever a perfect production, and attentive readers will doubtless discern flaws within the text. Soll's translations of passages from Colbert's papers are not always as precise as one might have expected: such linguistic lapses tend to be minor and in no case do they undermine his interpretation of the historical significance of the passages in question. One also finds signs of editorial laxity sprinkled throughout both the main text and endnotes, ranging from misspellings to poorly edited sentences. With rare exceptions, such textual errors are likely

to cause annoyance rather than bewilderment: nevertheless, one would hope that the product of a well-regarded university press would exhibit greater editorial care than is the case here.

The picayune errors mentioned above should not deflect attention from the generally high quality of Soll's book. *The Information Master* is an excellent book on a fascinating subject that is bound to attract readers from a range of historical and information-related fields: historians of early modern Europe will find in it an innovative redescription of Colbert's career; those interested in the history of libraries and archives will learn much about the political and cultural forces that shaped these information institutions in early modern Europe; and information historians will derive profit from Soll's many insights into the workings of Colbert's information-saturated administrative régime. In light of its excellence and potential interest for a fairly wide scholarly audience, this book richly deserves a place on the shelves of all academic libraries. —Thomas Dousa, *University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*.

Barbara M. Wildemuth. *Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information and Library Science*. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2009. 421p. alk. paper, \$50 (ISBN 9781591585039). LC 2008-053745

In this earnest, encyclopedic, energetic and easily accessible book, Barbara Wildemuth has produced a landmark text that will be of great use to information and library science (ILS) master and doctoral students, as well as to professors and professionals in library and allied fields. The hefty volume brings together various disciplines, incorporates enormous scholarship, and encourages research to help further the field of information and library science. Wildemuth, a professor in the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is either full author or coauthor of all chapters in the book; the

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dozen other coauthors (all identified in a contributors list) were doctoral students at her institution when the chapters were written.

While the title is unwieldy, it is nevertheless exact. The author's stated aim is to encourage readers to contribute to the field "by conducting research and evaluation studies and publishing their results." To learn how to do that—to learn how to use appropriate research models to achieve desired results—other texts from other fields, such as psychology or sociology, have traditionally been used. Seeing a need for a book that would explain research methods to librarians and informational professionals and students, using examples from the ILS field, she set out to fill the gap and has succeeded admirably.

Once noting the aim of the book, Wildemuth explains its tone. She writes that she "was envisioning a student or colleague sitting in my office, asking me questions." The friendly and jargon-free language she uses helps explicate concepts that could otherwise seem dense. Copious examples, breaking up of text with boldface titles and subtitles, the use of frequent summaries, and short chapter help in the process as well.

The organizational principles of the book and individual chapters are quite logical and uniform. A brief introduction (Section One) is followed by an examination of how to identify and refine a research question; Section Three discusses the number of options available in research designs, and associated sampling issues. Section Four introduces the methods of collecting data; Section Five focuses on the analyzing of data; and the final section briefly addresses how various research methods can be combined in particular studies.

Each chapter can be read individually from the others, and related themes present elsewhere in the book are helpfully noted to those readers who are sampling. (Those reading the text straight through might find the constant explanation of

abbreviations and the repeating patterns of explanation a bit wearying, but both are a tribute to the author's determination to be consistent.) The topic to be discussed in each chapter is summarized; the reader is told what will follow. The research method or analytical construct is identified and explained, and sometimes even the history of a particular methodology is given as well. Any confusion that might arise after a theoretical discussion almost always is resolved as the authors follow up the abstract with specific studies summarized from ILS literature. What is produced is not just an amazing synthesis of research methods and protocols but a succinct summary of various ILS research papers on numerous topics that used the particular research method under discussion. Endnotes and a list of works cited follow each chapter, making further research easier. Two indices round out the volume: one, on the authors of articles used as examples; the other, a subject index.

The book has not a single graphic throughout its hundreds of pages; but the scores of research articles illustrating the methods under discussion in each chapter open up broad vistas for not just students and professionals but the ILS field as a whole. This book will easily achieve its stated goal of aiding its readers in designing and publishing research projects that will eventually improve professional practice.—*Harlan Greene, College of Charleston.*

Laura Cruz. *The Paradox of Prosperity: The Leiden Booksellers' Guild and the Distribution of Books in Early Modern Europe.* New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Press, 2009. 275p. alk. paper, \$55 (ISBN 9781584562351). LC 2008-027743.

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