BOOK REVIEW

J. Pelton. *Global talk: The marriage of the computer, world communications and man*. Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981. 336 pp. £7.95. ISBN: 0 7108 0347 8.

This book offers us a forecast of economic, social and technological changes on earth in the next 20–100 years, which will be brought about by changes in computing and telecommunications. There are problems with any book of this type, and forecasting the future is a risky business for an author to undertake. One obvious problem is that the topic is too large for the book, resulting in treatment which is in places irritatingly superficial, and leading the author to stray from one area and good idea to another without consistent development. Several concepts (TIUPILS, telecomputer energetics, technological functionalism) are introduced briefly and then dropped without further mention. In this respect the book lacks depth where it attempts breadth. A further consequence of the rushed treatment of a wide range of topics is an anodyne conclusion and a plethora of anaemic axioms and imperatives ('we must seek better understanding of the social and political dynamics of technological change'). The author cites Asimov and Clarke as his models, and shows a leaning towards fictional construction in his dialogues which suggests a frustrated novelist. It is in his style and tone that some of the main problems of the book lie. Dr Pelton has attempted to produce a work which is 'intelligible to the informed public' at 'a level of sophistication greater than that which *People* magazine might provide, but without being as tedious as the *New York Times*'. The result is a book which is often patronizing—Dr Pelton tells us how difficult it is for a real scientist to write for ordinary people—and which is written in the style of a bad warm-up comedian in a third-rate night club. The publishers compound the errors by poor proof-reading and an irritating ignorance of spelling (hierarchical is so consistently mis-spelt it seems likely that neither author nor publisher knows the correct version).

The reader who can get past these problems will be both rewarded and frustrated. The book does not offer any increment to even the humanist's understanding of tomorrow, and the conclusion that both social problems and social benefits of the 'coming world of global talk' will be 'enormous' does not really help us. However, there is a vast amount of factual and descriptive information, conveniently gathered together, which the non-scientist may not find accessible elsewhere, together with discussion of the commercial and governmental, as well as technological, stances and developments which will affect the pattern of our future. The book contains several useful appendices of tabulated information and a very helpful glossary. Dr Pelton is good in discussing technological aspects of the fusion of computers and telecommunications, less good in discussing social applications—an area where he becomes more dependent on other visionary writers. The section on the city of tomorrow is typical ('we must forget architecture and take up arcology'). Dr Pelton's future city is one which seems to ignore man's feeling for the past, and this reviewer will be quite happy not to survive to live in an age of arcology—judging by the drawings the author provides. Happy in technical matters and broad brush descriptions, the author is less successful in detailing the precise characteristics of the changes which telecommunications, computers and information societies will

produce. Dr Pelton has told me a lot, but I still don't know what the day after tomorrow will be like, and for that I'm grateful.

I. Cornelius
Department of Library and Information Studies
University College
Dublin

Information Technology: Research and Development

Aims and Scope

Information Technology: Research and Development is concerned with research into, and development of the use of technology for storing and accessing information. It will cover both theoretical and practical details of information storage and retrieval, and the development of implementation of technology for effective access. The journal is intended to cover a wide range of topics from the conceptual problems inherent in the automatic organisation of information to their resolution in new technology, and from basic theory to the embodiment of ideas in operational systems. It will cover such topics as theories of indexing and searching models for processes and structures in information retrieval, methodology of experimental studies and new developments in retrieval technology. It will also publish papers on the implementation details of specific systems, new technology, computer algorithms for information storage and retrieval, and new developments such as Viewdata, videodisk systems, word processing, graphical displays, etc. Papers on the management of libraries or information collections, or concerning traditional manual methods would not normally be appropriate.

Instructions to authors

Original manuscripts that fit the aims, scope and policies of *Information Technology; Research and Development* may be submitted to the Editor.

Manuscripts should be submitted in triplicate (original and two copies). They should be typed, double-spaced, single-side, on International Standard Size A4 paper (or the nearest equivalent standard size in the USA) with a left-hand margin of 40 mm.

The title of the paper together with the name(s) and affiliation(s) of the author(s), and an abstract of 150–250 words should be given on a separate title page. The title should be repeated on page one of the manuscript.

All papers submitted will be refereed and must be written to a high standard of English. If referees require alterations to or a revision of an otherwise acceptable manuscript the author(s) will be responsible for retyping the paper. Papers up to 10,000 words in length will be accepted by the Editor but those over 5,000 words may be subject to editorial revision.

Tables and illustrations should be given on separate sheets with their location noted in the text. Graphs and diagrams should be drawn in black ink in a form suitable for reproduction without retouching.

Citations in the text should be given either with the date in parentheses:

... as suggested by Hawkins (1980)...'

or with name(s) and date in parentheses:

... recently it has been shown (Manola and Hsiao, 1979) that ...'

Use the form '(Manola *et al.*, 1975)' when there are more than two authors, but list all authors in the references. Quotations of more than one line of text from cited works should be indented and the citation should include the page number of the quotation, e.g. (Heaps, 1965:56).

To aid anonymous refereeing authors should cite their own work impersonally, e.g. '... Smith (1979) has suggested ...' rather than 'I have recently suggested (Smith, 1979) that ...'.

Footnotes should be kept to a minimum (where they cannot be avoided completely).

References should be listed in one alphabetical sequencing following the text in the form shown below:

(a) *journal articles*
   (spell out journal titles completely and give issue number when a volume is not continuously paged) Yu, C.T. and Salton, G. (1977) Effective information retrieval using term accuracy. *Communications of the ACM* 20, 135–142.
(b) *monographs*
   Heaps, H.S. (1978) *Information Retrieval: Computational and Theoretical Aspects.* New York: Academic Press.
(c) *papers from conference proceedings, etc.*
   Hawkins, C.J.B. (1980) Developments in raw technology. *Microprocessors and Intelligence.* (L.J. Anthony, ed.) pp 1–14. London: ASLIB.
(d) *research report*
   Manola, F. and Hsiao, D.K. (1973) *A model for keyword based file structures and access.* Washington D.C.: Naval Research Laboratory (NRL Memorandum Report 2544).

Page proofs will be supplied to the senior author of a paper but only errors in typesetting may be corrected at this stage. No changes in content will be permitted once the paper is set in type: consequently the author(s) should ensure that the paper is submitted in its final form.

The senior author will receive 20 complimentary offprints of the paper after publication. Additional offprints may be ordered: inquiries should be addressed directly to Butterworth Scientific Ltd. *not* to the Editor.

Manuscripts will be accepted on the understanding that their content is original and that the manuscript has not been submitted for publication elsewhere. However, papers delivered at conferences and meetings may be acceptable if they are significantly extended or altered from their original presentation as a result of further work.

Information Technology:
Research and Development

Contents

ARTICLES

BOOK REVIEWS