

**BRYSON, Jo. *Managing Information Services: A sustainable approach*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing. 2011.**

**421 pages. ISBN 978 1 40940 696 9. £30.00**

I was intrigued to catch sight of the new edition of Jo Bryson's *Managing Information Services*. Third in the series, this new edition sees some significant revisions. The change in the subtitle is a good hint that there have been changes, and whilst the core content remains much the same as previous editions, the focus has shifted. It is important for all information professionals to consider how we can sustain our services in the economic environments in which we are based. Just this last week, the news is full of public library closures, and it is perfectly right to consider what can be, should be, or sadly perhaps can no longer be sustained. This book focuses on the hows and whys of good management in order that we position ourselves, as far as we are able, to provide a service that meets the current and future needs of our clientele.

The author describes the book as part text book and part handbook. As a service manager, for me it will be an important handbook and guide to dip into regularly. Overall, the book is well organised with six main sections. I particularly liked the clear diagrammatic overview at the beginning of each of the sections, as it served as an excellent reminder of what was to come, and where the current section fitted into the overall scheme of things. What I liked less was the structure of the individual chapters - the subheadings in each chapter were confusing, the hierarchy was not overly clear, and I frequently flipped back to the beginning of the chapter expecting to find a table of contents to help me understand what was subtitle, and what was subsidiary to each key point. I found that I used the index a great deal more than usual.

Despite my navigational difficulties, I found the content to be excellent. We are taken through the essential issues for a manager: firstly, strategic overview and planning including a helpful section on how to position ourselves strategically, and then a second section considering all aspects of leadership. I found the section on innovation and creativity especially helpful and stimulating. Subsequent sections considered governance and social responsibility, followed by customer and market focus. New to this edition was the final section on success and sustainability which summarizes much of the content of the book, and brings us back to the ultimate focus of our endeavours – users, who are the reason for having a service at all, and furthermore provide the rationale for providing an excellent service.

The book contains a new current list of references and further lists of suggested reading to follow up. It makes good use of bullet point lists and figures & tables which summarize a lot of information well. Diagrams to illustrate text were also well-used, appealing to my visual learning style. It felt exactly like the sort of book that would have something to guide and prompt a manager through a particular issue, as well as providing (for a different occasion perhaps), a stimulating and thought-provoking fresh look at the bigger strategic issues that lie at the heart of managing sustainable services.

I know that it is a book I will keep close by and refer to frequently. So for me it is a handbook, rather than a text book, but I can well imagine that those currently taking professional courses will find this an essential core text for management studies.

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