THE COLUMBIA GUIDE TO DIGITAL PUBLISHING. WILLIAM E KASDORF (EDITOR). NEW YORK: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2003. 816 PAGES. HARDCOVER. $65.00. ISBN 0-231-12498-8.

The Columbia Guide to Digital Publishing is the *War and Peace* of digital-communication resources. It is epic in scope and exhaustive in detail, historic and prophetic. An original. A universe. It's long, but it's all substance.

This 750-page guide is the only comprehensive reference for producing written or graphic content in digital form, the cover states. It is continually updated for online subscribers, of course.

The editor, William E Kasdorf, is a past president of the Society for Scholarly Publishing, president of Impressions Book and Journal Services, and vice president of IoFlex, Inc. The book's 20 contributors paint the wide landscape and fill in the details with precision—more than precision, really: any dictionary is precise, but some are more artful than others, and some are more functional than others.

Kasdorf leads us across the span from discovery to practical application. True, some of us may feel as though we are groping our way through a tunnel, while others sprint ahead on the information highway. Either way, the *Columbia Guide* has plenty to offer.

How the collaborators tapped digital technology's potential to create a new and better reference format is definitive in itself. In the preface, Kasdorf spells out how the project team developed and produced the *Guide* and explains the special indexing process they used. The publisher, Columbia University Press; the compositor, Impressions Book and Journal Services; and the developer of the content management system, Open Book Systems, together demonstrated how to do a digital publication right the first time. With maximal efficiency, they created a work of maximal utility.

The table of contents startles—at 40 pages (I counted twice to be sure), it includes every subhead, each with its page number. The magnitude is not the point, however; the format saves the user's time. It is one of numerous innovations that expedite the pursuit of information, whether one is browsing or hurriedly seeking a fact. The table of contents also instructs by clearly showing what the new field of digital publishing consists of, what the outstanding questions are, and where all the pieces fit.

The table of contents provides an informative abstract for each chapter, not a fanciful blurb intended only to entice. Some abstracts define the topic ("Markup: XML & Related Technologies"), and some identify the compelling issues ("Content Management and Web Publishing").

Inside, the copyright and trademark section is a notable example of specialized information translated with the noncognoscenti's level of understanding in mind. The authors graciously designed it to "help the reader be more alert to legal issues that may arise, and be a more informed consumer of legal services". This section includes interesting cautionary tales from litigation.

The book is unadorned, graphically, as a reference should be. The four-level hierarchy of sections and subsections is clear at a glance, enabling you to distinguish instantly what you *are* looking for from what you are *not* looking for.

There's a complete, concise glossary of terms and abbreviations. The nine-page bibliography includes the URL (Uniform Resource Locator) for virtually every citation. Cross-references in the index are used generously but not to the point of annoyance. Glossary terms and cross-references are in boldface in the text and linked in the online version.

The broad topics are digital rights management, digital asset management, content markup—XML, data capture and conversion, content management, digital printing, international and legal issues, e-books, metadata, accessibility, document structure, technical infrastructure, multimedia publishing, Web publishing, and archiving; also, organizing, editing and linking content; and composition, design, and graphics.

Overwhelming? Despite its mass, it is handy. And it is an interesting read—an unexpected bonus for an encyclopedic tome. Kasdorf's understanding of the book's audience is evident from the start.

He picked expert authors whose passion for the subject adds a dimension of energy, even excitement, which one just doesn't hope to experience when consulting a guidebook.

This book's utility alone lifts it above the average reference work. But its insight and direction offer a sense of support and encouragement. One feels as though one has attended a particularly interesting, informative seminar and can now forge onward with more confidence.

In the editor's words: "Digital technology in publishing is here to stay—but it won't stand still. Although it may seem daunting at first, it's both exhilarating and empowering. We can accomplish so much more in the digital world: digital technology enables us to publish much richer content, in so many more ways, and to do so more effectively and efficiently than ever before. Certainly, it's possible to stumble and go astray; not every experiment works, not every venture pays off. But when digital technologies are implemented well, they make life easier, and when they are exploited to their full potential, they pay off handsomely in the long run. This Guide is here to help you along the way."

Out of curiosity, I checked reviews of *War and Peace* on *amazon.com* and noted that some characterizations of the Tolstoy classic do seem to parallel those of the *Columbia Guide to Digital Publishing:* "It has the ring of truth . . . it strips away glorification . . . it depicts the metamorphosis of a culture . . . so much is contained in the book, yet it never loses track of the characters and how they are evolving."

The Columbia Guide may be new, and it may be the first of its kind, but it has the makings of a classic.

Linda Hengstler

LINDA HENGSTLER *is editorial director of the Journal Group at Dowden Health Media in Montvale, New Jersey.*
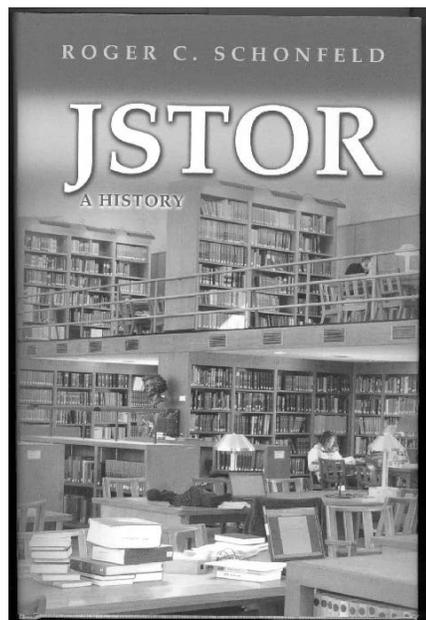
JSTOR: A HISTORY. ROGER C SCHONFELD. PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY: PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2003. 412 PAGES. HARDCOVER. $34.95. ISBN 0-691-11531-1.

A detailed account of the development of an online database seems an unlikely subject for a book, at least for an engaging book. However, *JSTOR: A History* is much more than a story about developing a database, and portions are quite absorbing.

For those unfamiliar with JSTOR, the database contains more than 16 million full-text pages, the result of digitizing 110,000 back issues of nearly 450 journals. Experts consider many of these journals to be core to their respective fields. As of October 2004, 2160 libraries in 86 countries had licensed access to this digital archive, and use has been high. During 2003, users searched JSTOR 132 million times and printed nearly 16 million articles.

The story of JSTOR contains lessons for many audiences. Those interested in costing or managing large-scale digitization projects, marketing electronic resources to academe, or creating a self-sustaining, not-for-profit entity will find much to consider. I was particularly struck by how one well-placed person with vision, enthusiasm, and a large measure of diligence could persevere to create this digital archive of global prominence. When I first read the foreword by Hal Varian (dean of the School of Information and Management Systems, University of California, Berkeley), his comment "clone Bill Bowen" (p xi) seemed curious. By the end of the first few chapters, I understood that without Bill Bowen there would be no JSTOR.

William G Bowen is the president of the Andrew W Mellon Foundation, a trustee of Denison University, president emeritus of Princeton University, and an economist who has studied and written about nonprofit organizations. Bowen theorized that academic libraries could save space and possibly avoid or delay expensive capital expansion projects if back issues of important journals became available through a digital archive; it would make it possible to remove the print counterparts from library shelves.

As he developed his idea for a digital archive, Bowen took some uncommon steps for the leader of a grant-making organization. He spearheaded the project himself for well over a year, at times devoting one-third of his work life to JSTOR development (p 69). For project planning and management, Bowen drew heavily on the talents and time of Mellon Foundation employees and advisers. During the first 1 ½ years, JSTOR was a Mellon Foundation project, an unusual role for an entity used to making awards and providing oversight.

As the complexities of the JSTOR project grew, Bowen led it successfully to organizational independence. In doing so, he believed that it could be "both self-sufficient and also perceived by the library community as fair in its business practices" (p 100). To take over the nascent not-for-profit JSTOR organization, Bowen hired a uniquely suited leader in Kevin Guthrie. (Guthrie's contribution to JSTOR's success is quite noteworthy as well.)

JSTOR: A History begins with JSTOR's conception in late 1993 and ends at the close of 2001, by which time JSTOR had become a very successful and unique online resource. That period of JSTOR's development parallels the ascent and much of the decline of the dot-com industry and illustrates the progression of technology during those years. In 1993, Web servers numbered in the hundreds (p 58). While these increased in quantity exponentially, Internet bandwidth lagged, so in 1997 printing an article from JSTOR could take 15 minutes (p 257). By the end of 2001, technology had reduced the printing time substantially and delivered JSTOR to 1200 libraries (p 328) in 53 countries (p 333) through a US facility and European mirror site.

The story of JSTOR is told through the book's introduction, extensive timeline, 14 chapters, a conclusion, and an interesting epilogue. Chapters 1 through 3 chronicle JSTOR's early evolution, including the Mellon Foundation's partnership with the University of Michigan to develop software and oversee scanning of the journals by a company based outside the United States. Chapter 4 details the challenges faced and decisions made during the pilot project of scanning 750,000 pages. JSTOR becomes an independent not-for-profit organization in Chapter 5. The central theme of Chapters 6

Reviews

continued

through 9 is getting organized. Steps include reexamining JSTOR's mission, constructing a business plan, professionalizing operations, and determining the relationship that JSTOR would have with journal publishers. Chapters 10 through 14 focus on scaling up operations, both in the number of journal collections available through JSTOR and in the number of library participants.

Because of the complexity of the project and the detail with which the story is told, some of the chapters overlap in time. This makes it somewhat challenging to keep track of events happening in similar periods, but referring to the detailed timeline before Chapter 1 does much to alleviate the difficulty. The epilogue is another useful aid for those wishing to get the most from their reading. It provides a well-organized overview of the lessons learned from several vantage points. In addition to lessons of mission, organization, and operation, there are those categorized specifically for grant-makers, libraries, and publishers.

As a member of the Mellon Foundation's research staff, Roger C Schonfeld, the author, appropriately identifies himself as an insider. It is difficult to imagine anyone other than an insider writing this book so well. Many of the nearly 1000 footnotes refer to interviews, personal notes, e-mail messages, and files that may not have been made available to others.

Schonfeld treats the story thoughtfully by carefully pointing out the challenges faced by those involved and where decisions could have been made earlier or more completely. *JSTOR: A History* is a reflective, scholarly, and readable story of the development of JSTOR, the database—an excellent account of a noteworthy endeavor.

Greg Pratt

GREG PRATT *is a dentist turned systems analyst who works in the Research Medical Library of the University of Texas M D Anderson Cancer Center and has been searching databases, such as JSTOR, for more than 15 years.*

Book Note

HEAVENLY ERRORS: MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE REAL NATURE OF THE UNIVERSE. NEIL F COMINS. NEW YORK: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2001. 232 PAGES. HARDCOVER $59.00. ISBN 0-231-11644-6. SOFTCOVER $15.95. ISBN 0-231-11645-4.

Heavenly Errors: Misconceptions About the Real Nature of the Universe sets out to correct not only errors in astronomical perceptions but also errors in everyday thinking. Comins begins the book with a delightful chapter that debunks many commonly held wrong ideas about astronomy, such as that the Sun burns gas to produce light (light is produced as a byproduct of nuclear fusion) and that seasons are caused by a change in Earth's distance to the Sun (the tilt of Earth causes the seasons). As the book evolves, however, Comins extends his corrections not only to "heavenly errors" but to the entire universe of human thought.

At times, Comins's crusade to promote scientific thinking can be practical and useful. For example, he shares some teaching tricks he has used to help students replace incorrect concepts. At other times, Comins seems to be preaching scientific thought as the only valid way to understand the universe. He devotes a number of pages to quantifying how difficult life was for our forebears without the benefit of science as he tries to explain why science is important for improving quality of life.

Overall, *Heavenly Errors* presents an interesting perspective on how personal cosmology can affect perceptions of science. The engaging descriptions of scientific phenomena with their clear logic and light-hearted tone, however, become scarce after the first chapter. Anyone interested in how people develop mental reference frames will find *Heavenly Errors* an intriguing read. Those who are more interested in astronomical phenomena may want to pass.

JAMIE DE GREGORY *prepared this book note while a* Science Editor *intern.*