

of overlap between topics discussed under the four headings used in the book and this makes the job of analysis a little more difficult.

For those wishing to canvass the issues involved in this field, this book is a useful start. It is perhaps best to look elsewhere for possible solutions.

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Australian Office Administration, second edition, by James Saville
 (Macmillan Australia, 1983) pp. 300, \$14.95.

The first edition of this book was published in 1977 and has provided a useful resource for teachers and students in office administration. The recently-issued second edition is the subject of this review, which will examine the level and content of the book, as well as changes which have been made since the first edition.

The author is a lecturer in the Department of Management Studies at Sydney Technical College, and the book is most appropriate for Technical College, and perhaps College of Advanced Education Associate Diploma-level courses, for which it is obviously written. *Australian Office Administration* covers a broad range of topics, dealing, as its cover notes suggest, "both with people and with the technical aspects of office administration". The book is designed for those aspiring to become office managers or supervisors, and the content is divided under four main headings: (a) 'The office environment', (b) 'Offices and people', (c) 'Creating the physical environment', and (d) 'Towards greater efficiency'.

'The office environment', which serves as an introduction to the book, examines why offices exist and the functions they serve. It provides a clear exposition of a variety of organisational structures, as well as suggesting informal structures, which might be found within the office. It also introduces two themes which recur throughout the book, the challenge of technology and the need for office managers to understand the changing values found in society at large, and to be prepared for them to be reflected in changing values within the working environment. It concludes by setting out the characteristics displayed by an effective office manager.

This comparatively short section is followed by one of the two major areas focussed upon in the book. 'Offices and people' addresses the question of staffing, from selection to development, motivation, discipline and evaluation. Much of this appears to be unchanged from the first edition, but there is a sub-section devoted to health and safety in the office, which reflects a development both in the focus of attention of trade unions and of others concerned with the well-being of office workers. This has only comparatively recently attracted much interest, an interest perhaps a result of the burgeoning of women's studies combined with the prominence given to advances in office technology. Ergonomics, the possible dangers of visual display units, noise and stress are covered, but the potential dangers of the various chemicals now used in office

equipment, such as photocopiers and stencil cutters, requiring careful supervision and handling, do not receive a specific mention. Duplicating machines are discussed later in the book, but not in relation to health and safety.

The author provides neither bibliography nor suggested further readings at the end of chapters. This matters less when the focus is on the technical side of office administration, but when the author discusses theories of motivation, for example, it is a more obvious shortcoming. Herzberg's motivation theories are discussed, and the Hawthorne experiment and the work of Taylor are also described. But the author does so in a conversational style which, while easy to read, tends to give more emphasis to authorial opinion than to the substance of motivation theory, and leaves the reader feeling rather uneasy about the content.

The third section, 'Creating the physical environment', addresses both the question of where to locate an office, and, once located, its internal arrangements. This is more straightforward and clearly enumerated, and it is in this and the last section that the book's strength of explanation lies.

The final section, 'Towards greater efficiency', concentrates on the technical side of office administration, such as communications, financial controls, computing and word processing. Computing, for the uninitiated, is clearly explained, although the coverage of word processing is rather less satisfactory and gives the impression of being an afterthought.

The scope of the book is very broad and so it is not surprising, perhaps, that it suffers from being rather uneven. The treatment of word processing, for example, displays two weaknesses. The first is an underlying inconsistency of approach. This is demonstrated by the contrast between what the author writes of the need to understand motivation, and the potential dangers of stress suffered by office workers. Yet, while he refers to the passive resistance displayed by some office workers in the face of the introduction of word processing, he does little to relate the two. But perhaps motivation theory is not seen to apply to the female of the species. Nor, having discussed the effects of high unemployment in the community on people in jobs, does he relate that to the fear experienced by workers that redundancy will be the next step after the introduction of word processing.

Similarly, he does not adequately address the tension between the way in which manufacturers sell word processors ('operator-proof', 'little training necessary') with the reality that to use them to their full potential requires considerable skill and a long period of familiarisation. It is again inadequate to say that "Experience has shown that many are not able to learn all the intricacies of word processing concepts in the few days that are often allowed for the purpose". The "few days" (and often less) are what are offered by the manufacturers. Word processing is, unless used in a highly repetitive way, a very skilled job. Lack of recognition of the fact is extremely harmful and leads to many of the problems met when it is introduced, which are, in fact, quite avoidable.

So where the author explains techniques he is clear and helpful, but the book is less convincing when the author considers the "people" questions. The first edition was also weakest here, carrying sub-headings such as 'The

challenge of liberation movements' and 'Is this what the counter-culture's all about?' These have been subsumed under blander headings, such as 'The challenge of changing values', but still the treatment lacks conviction and the book smacks more of lecture notes than the product of careful research.

According to the cover notes, *Australian Office Administration* was written to "fill a gap resulting from the lack of an Australian textbook covering office supervision and management". There are several books on office administration available, but they are either aggressively American or British in content or very low level and poorly written, so this is certainly a fair claim. The Australian content is not overwhelming, but that is not a criticism since there are not that many aspects of organising an office which are nationally conditioned.

It will, therefore, remain a valuable text for the level at which it is directed, and most of the amendments are an improvement. It is a sad indication of the changes which have taken place in Australia between the publication of the first and second editions of *Australian Office Administration* that the second edition excludes the first edition's 'Work in an affluent society', in favour of a section entitled 'The unemployed and the underutilized', but blame for the more pessimistic tone here can hardly be laid at the feet of the author.

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STUCK! Unemployed people talk to Michele Turner, by Michele Turner

(Penguin, Ringwood, Vic., 1983) pp. 263, \$6.95.

As the subtitle suggests, *Stuck!* is about "living without work — the stories that statistics can't tell". The book has a useful and necessary introduction by Keith Windschuttle, who reviews briefly, from a structural point of view, the current unemployment situation. He examines unemployment in relation to the recession, older workers, men, women and families, youth unemployment and the impact of immigration policies. One omission, however, seems to be the whole issue of multiple income families. If it could be made economically viable for families, with relevant expectations, to achieve financial stability on one income, then the work that was available could be shared more equitably.

In a nutshell, the book is a condensation of some 37 field interviews carried out with unemployed people. The author classifies her interviewees into 16 categories, although she does not specify how she arrives at the final classification. These categories are in three main groupings: (1) Who can't get a job; (2) Surviving unemployed; and (3) What else? The interviews were obtained voluntarily by the author visiting various Commonwealth Employment Service offices in her specially appointed 'interview truck'. These interviews, largely unstructured, were tape recorded and then typed.

One Chapter is entitled 'A degree isn't a work ticket' and deals with the