

## BOOK REVIEWS

**AAHP/Dorland Directory of Health Plans.** Philadelphia, PA: Dorland Healthcare Information, 2000. 369 p. \$265.00. ISBN 1-880874-63-6.

In 1995, the Group Health Association of America (GHAA) and the American Managed Care and Review Association (AMCRA) merged to form the American Association of Health Plans (AAHP). Jointly published by AAHP and Dorland Healthcare Information ([www.dorlandhealth.com](http://www.dorlandhealth.com)), this resource features contact information for more than 1,500 managed care plans in the United States. Plans include health maintenance organizations (HMOs), preferred provider organizations (PPOs), utilization review organizations (UROs), exclusive provider organizations (EPOs), third party administrators (TPAs), and point-of-service (POS) options. Arranged by state, typical health plan entries feature plan name, address, telephone or fax numbers, Website, plan officers, type of plan, year established, enrollment information, and other data.

This resource also includes the AAHP code of conduct, health issues addressed by the U.S. Congress during the 1999 legislative session, plan definitions, "yellow pages" of organization members, and various indexes (company, service area). For an additional fee, purchasers of this directory can access the same data through Dorland's Website, purchase the database on diskette, or order mailing lists based on specific markets.

Although partially supported by Pfizer, this directory features advertisements from fifteen advertisers. As more than 150 million Americans are covered by some type of health plan, and many organizations contract with or market to the managed care industry, this directory provides information useful to hospital marketing directors,

medical directors, and librarians alike.

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**The Annual Consumer's Guide to Health & Medicine on the Internet 2000.** Edited by James B. Davis. Los Angeles, CA: Health Information Press, 2000. 958 p. \$19.95. ISBN 1-885987-18-8.

There are numerous ways for consumers and health science librarians to find health information on the Internet. Books, journals, classes, presentations, and columns in newspapers and magazines provide a constant flow of advice. However, when busy librarians try to find speedy answers, a single volume right at hand may be the fastest and easiest way to find the appropriate Website. This hefty paperback is one of those treasure troves that reference librarians like to keep nearby. It is no more than it claims: an annotated listing of Internet sites, accurate when compiled but in need of regular updating. There has been at least one earlier edition, as described in the "Introduction" and announced on the cover: "Updated! 300+ pages added!" With the modest price of \$19.95, no library should mind having to buy a new edition every year.

One might wonder about the need for a printed, paper copy of Web uniform resource locators (URLs) when there are plenty of such lists on the Web itself. However, there is nothing quite so handy or browse-able as a book, especially when, as in this case, it has annotations, illustrations of Web pages, a subject index, and comprehensive coverage. There are "70 chapters, beginning with *Abuse* and ending with *Women's Health*. Each chapter is broken down into several

subtopics that are arranged alphabetically." Most chapters are concerned with various diseases, but there are also sections devoted to "Grants & Funding for Research," "Health Care Careers & Education," "Medical Humor," "Organizations," and "Quizzes, Tools & Online Calculators." The political, legal, and administrative aspects of health care are included, as well as links to the professions of nursing, dentistry, chiropractic, osteopathy, alternative medicine, and allied health. The treatment of many topics is wide: "Fitness," for example, includes martial arts and hiking trails.

The useful annotations are purely factual, with no editorial comment or recommendations. Libraries open to the public may like to know that sexuality and suicide are as well represented as other topics. The chapter on "Organizations" has no annotations; it is twenty-seven pages of alphabetically listed titles and URLs.

The chapter on "Medical References/Resources" includes government and library sites under subtopics such as "Consumer Health," "Databases," "Gateways," and "Libraries." A few of this reviewer's favorites are not listed but are available (pleasant surprise!) through the URL for "OHSU Library: Internet Resources"—without an explanation of what "OHSU" is (Oregon Health Sciences University).

The intended audience for this book is "consumers." As with Consumers Union publications, private individuals would have to realize that the information is quickly dated, and the book would have to be purchased annually to be useful. As a reference tool in almost any kind of library, however, the modest price and wealth of information make it an excellent addition. This reviewer hopes that the compiler keeps up the annual work of updating that will continue to make

this an effective reference publication.

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WILLIS, MARK R. **Dealing with Difficult People in the Library.** Chicago, IL, and London, U.K.: American Library Association, 1999. \$28.00. 195 p. ISBN 0-8389-0760-1. ©

The author of this book holds a degree in communications and has worked for more than a decade as the community relations manager at the Dayton and Montgomery County Public Library. Although he does not have a library or information science degree, he shows significant insight regarding how library staff and directors should manage the "difficult patron."

Also, despite the fact that this book is written for public library staff, many of the depicted scenarios and offered solutions can apply to medical library settings. In fact, at least two scenarios use health care-related examples. One such scenario involves an overwhelmed library patron looking for health care information regarding her ill mother (p. 15). Another is an analogy to a hospital setting, where a nurse inadvertently dehumanizes a patient with a possible brain tumor by saying to a technician, "I've got a head for you" (p. 16).

These two examples, which occur at the outset of the book, unintentionally crystallize two important facts about the medical library setting: searching for medical information can be stressful, and patrons seeking such information—whether laypersons or professionals—can be harried or burned-out. Another book, *Coping with Difficult People in the Health Care Setting* [1], does not pertain directly to libraries but elaborates on the idiosyn-

crasies of dealing with health care professionals, who are described as "demanding" and as "expect[ing] special treatment" (p. 3). The book even devotes a chapter (pp. 111–117) to the high-tech professional (HTP), who "may become abrasive to others" (p. 113). So, in the medical library environment, guidance for coping with inherent potential conflicts can be used.

The first chapter of *Dealing with Difficult People in the Library* points out many reasons why the present-day library is prone to stress. One such reason is that the environment is constantly changing, to the extent that "change is our motto" (p. 4). This change is contradicted by the tendency and need to "control" the environment (p. 8). This contradiction causes tension for both library staff and patrons. The first chapter also highlights "workable solutions," which are elaborated on throughout the book, namely, developing communication skills, creating policies that reduce problems, and training for all library staff (pp. 4–5). Chapters 2 and 3 outline very specific techniques for how library staff can control themselves and thus control the difficult situation. The techniques are really keys to successful interpersonal communication in general.

The remaining chapters in Section I, entitled "Problem Patrons? No Problem!," are primarily devoted to specific types of problems or users. There are not only chapters on the more common occurrences of "angry" patrons or "complainers," but also chapters pertaining to dangerous, mentally ill, and homeless (with some fascinating statistics) patrons, as well as dealing with suspicions of child abuse. Many medical libraries are open to the general public, so these scenarios can indeed arise. Perhaps the chapter about dealing with children is the least relevant for the medical library setting. Most of the chapters about specific types of users and situations are structured

with goals, guidelines, and sample situations. This format, combined with the initial and closing general or summary chapters, leads to occasional redundancy across chapters of basic techniques such as "stay calm" (pp. 24, 32, 37). Nonetheless, having each chapter devoted to a specific type of scenario is useful.

The chapter called "Real Problem Cases" suggests, in some instances, referring the problem patron to "the director or some other management person" (p. 27). Following this suggestion are very practical tips as to exactly what the director should do and say. For example, the director should tell the patron exactly "which behaviors are prohibited" and that "repeating these behaviors will result in banning from the library" (p. 27). Advice follows to put that information in writing for the patron. The importance of listening to the patron's point of view is emphasized, because "the patron may point out some issue that causes or exacerbates his or her behavior" (p. 27). Although these tips may seem obvious upon reading them, under stress, a director or manager may not have the presence of mind to take these steps without some advance training or advice to do so. In fact, much of the advice in the book boils down to seemingly obvious "common sense" and good communication skills, but many of us do not demonstrate those traits when stressed.

Also in Section I is a chapter on "Taming the Internet." In this chapter, the book's intended audience of the public library is apparent. This chapter is not as helpful for academic or medical libraries. Certainly, some issues and tips do relate, but the chapter takes a somewhat simplified perspective, comparing the taming of the Internet to the taming of videos (p. 45). The chapter does not fully address the very complex role the Internet plays in our libraries.