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Book review

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Chan, L. et al (2002) *Budapest Open Access Initiative*. New York: Open Society Institute. <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml> (Retrieved 22 January 2007)

Pickard, A. J. (2007) *Research methods in information*. London: Facet Publishing. 329 pp. ISBN 978-1-85604-545-2. £39.95

Reviewed by Jessica Gaunt, Subject Librarian, Cardiff University

This book is a valuable guide to the research process partly because it is 'the first to focus entirely on the research needs of the information and communications community.' This focus proves successful with research examples and authorial advice rooted in the world of the intended audience of information students and practitioners. The author notes that information professionals are finding research increasingly important in their work, both to ensure services are accountable and to engage with the profession's body of knowledge.

Pickard is an engaging writer who has used her research and teaching experience to produce a readable and practical text. The content is thorough with clear explanations of difficult concepts and the whole book is illuminated by her enthusiasm for her subject. It is well organised, the sections are broken up into short chapters so it is easy to dip in and out of the book. Each chapter ends with a summary, a practical exercise and a list of further reading which all give added value.

Part 1, 'Starting the research process', discusses difficult concepts such as research paradigms in an accessible way. Examples are used to good effect, such as the electronic resources study which underpins the chapter on defining research. Pickard comes across as a principled researcher and in the chapter on ethics she emphasises the importance of avoiding covert research methods.

Part 2, 'Research methods', tackles common methods such as case studies and surveys and less commonly known ones such as ethnography. Misconceptions such as the terms survey and questionnaire being used interchangeably are resolved, while a clear explanation is given of how much experiments can actually prove.

Part 3, 'Data collection techniques', details techniques such as interviews and observation. As in the rest of the book, realistic advice is given, for example do not expect too much from open-ended questions in questionnaires. Pickard introduces online data collection techniques such as online focus groups but does not examine them in detail. It would be interesting to see more on this in the future when research develops further into virtual environments, but for now useful references for additional reading are provided.

Part 4, 'Data analysis and research presentation', examines qualitative and quantitative analysis of data. The use of tables to explain statistical methods and illustrations to show how to present qualitative findings are very successful. The last chapter focuses on presenting a research dissertation, but provides a good framework for presenting any research.

I have no real criticisms of this book, only suggestions for minor improvements to good features. There is an eight page glossary which I referred to frequently, but there were a couple of other definitions which could helpfully have been added. Similarly, while examples of research were used throughout to good effect, my personal preference would have been for even more.

In summary, this book successfully covers the key information in an accessible way, while its information world focus and the direct, enthusiastic style of its author (Pickard refers to research as her 'passion' and encourages researchers to 'go for it') just add to its appeal.