Review of
Stock, W.G. and Stock, M. *Handbook of Information Science*, Berlin, de Gruyter, 2013

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Clearly, information science texts are taking on something of the infamous nature of London buses; one waits for years for a good one, and then several come along at once. This new offering joins Davis and Shaw's *Introduction to Information Science and Technology* [1], Bawden and Robinson's *Introduction to Information Science* [2], and Ibekwe-SanJuan's *La science de l'information: origins, theories at paradigms* [3].

This book, however, is rather different in nature to the others. Where they are sourcebooks, introducing the topics and pointing to the literature for details, this is a genuine handbook, presenting sufficient detail to allow the reader, in most cases, to avoid recourse to the original source. This is evident from the size of the books, particularly when one considers the limited scope of this new one, as noted below: The three texts noted above have respectively 272, 351 and 261 pages, while this *Handbook* provides 901. In itself, this tells us much of the likely use of these sources.

The back cover publicity tells us that "The *Handbook* focuses on the fundamental disciplines of information science, namely information retrieval, knowledge representation and informetrics." That is a certainly an accurate representation of the book's contents, with one caveat mentioned below. Whether it is an accurate portrayal of information science is another matter; the other three books mentioned all take a broader view. Interestingly, so do the authors of this book, who in the introduction suggest that information science comprises five sub-disciplines: information retrieval; knowledge representation; knowledge management and information literacy; information society and information markets; and informetrics. This is a little restrictive in itself compared with the other three texts, with academic curricula, and with the content of journals such as *Journal of Information Science*, *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, and *Journal of Documentation*. Information behaviour studies, usually regarded as a major and core aspect of the subject, does not figure in this model, and in the *Handbook* is represented only by a short chapter on studies of the use of IR systems. However, this book does not even cover the limited scope suggested by its authors: information and knowledge management does not feature at all beyond some limited remarks in the introduction parts; nor does the information society (this omission justified by its coverage in another recent text); while information and digital literacies get only a small section in an introductory chapter, and informetrics appears as an equally small section, limited to informetric studies of information retrieval. These limitations of coverage are such that one cannot help feeling that the book would better have been titled *Handbook of Information Representation and Retrieval*.

Judged in that way, this book gives a thorough, generally well-balanced, and detailed account of its subject. It is in three main parts. The first is an introductory chapter deals with the nature of the discipline, with some major concepts such as information, knowledge and documents, and with information literacy. A second parts deals with information retrieval in seven chapters, while the third covers information representation in eight chapters. The treatment of all the topics is authoritative and in-depth; it is a genuine handbook, in that it gives sufficient detail that in most cases it will be unnecessary to consult the primary literature. As noted above, this is in sharp contrast to the other texts mentioned, and makes this particularly valuable for those wishing to get quickly to the nitty-gritty of the material, with the downside that the material is likely to date rapidly. It also seems genuinely comprehensive, and includes a very wide range of relevant literature. The authors provide useful historical contexts for the topics. A reviewer can always find omissions in a text of this very wide and detailed coverage – there is nothing here on the intriguing use of quantum mechanics formalisms for information retrieval [4] - but overall this text has a wide a cover of retrieval and representation issues as the most demanding reviewer or reader could reasonably expect.

The book is clearly written and free from noticeable errors. Appropriately enough, it has a good index, and a helpful glossary and list of abbreviations.

The *Handbook* will be particularly valuable for researchers and advanced students in the areas of information retrieval and representation, though it would have to be supplemented by other sources for the rest of the information science discipline. It will also, in years to come, stand as useful historical snapshot of the state of these aspects of the disciplines at the time of publication. The back cover publicity recommends it as a reference work for public and academic libraries, and its nature (and price) are likely to make it an institutional rather than individual purchase.

References

1. Davis, C.H. and Shaw,D. *Introduction to information science and technology*, Medford NJ, Information Today, 2011

2. Bawden, D. and Robinson, L. *Introduction to information science*, London, Facet, 2012

3. Ibekwe-SanJuan, F. *La science de l'information: origins, theories at paradigms*, Paris, Lavoisier, 2012

4 Melucci, M. and van Rijsbergen, K. Quantum mechanics and information retrieval, in Melucci, M. and Baeza-Yates, R. (eds), *Advanced Topics in Information Retrieval: the Information Retrieval Series 33*, Heidelberg: Springer, 2011,, chapter 6, pp 125-155