

*Foundations of Information Policy*. By Paul T. Jaeger and Natalie Greene Taylor. Chicago: ALA Neal-Schuman, 2019. 232 pp. Softcover. \$64.99.

In *Foundations of Information Policy*, Paul T. Jaeger, PhD, JD (professor and MLIS program codirector at the University of Maryland) and Natalie Greene Taylor, PhD (assistant professor at the University of South Florida and researcher on young adult information access) endeavor to familiarize library and information professionals, administrators, students, and users with information policy guidelines. *Foundations of Information Policy* comprises the following chapters, some with different explorations of similar topics, but all containing an all-important noun: “Searching for Information (Policy)”; “What Is Information Policy?”; “Sources of Information Policy”; “Why Study Information Policy?”; “The Development of Information Policy”; “Types of Laws, Policies, and Regulations Impacting Information: Access, Infrastructure, and Management”; “Types of Laws, Policies, and Regulations Impacting Information: Access, Rights, and Responsibilities”; “Information Policy, Information Professions, and Information Institutions”; “The Broader Context of Information Policy”; “Advocacy and Activism in the Information Professions”; and “The Future of Information Policy.” Nancy Kranich’s afterword, “Adventures in Information Policy Wonderland,” concludes the volume.

The book starts out somewhat glibly by defining what “information policy” is before explaining what is meant by the term “information” itself. *Random House Webster’s College Dictionary* (1991) defines “information” as “knowledge gained through study, communication, research, instruction . . . data; facts.” Under this definition, information itself is technology-agnostic, but in our modern contexts, “information” too often denotes digital data to the exclusion of analog materials. However, analog formats still operate as necessary backups when digital data are inaccessible or unavailable. Card catalogs still exist—especially in smaller institutions with limited budgets or in specialized units of larger entities—and curators and users still need to know how and when to use them. When Jaeger and Taylor discuss the chronology of information conventions, they mostly begin with the twentieth century’s communication technology revolution of motion pictures, radio and television broadcasting, and computational data, even though historical foundations are cumulative. While the focus is increasingly on digital data, it should be noted that information policy applies to all information regardless of the media used to create it.

As Jaeger and Taylor explain, information policy can relate to public laws and regulations or private protocols carried out by corporate bodies, and, while laws and regulations undoubtedly influence the private sector, public policy is not always apposite to private practice. For instance, government archives serve both the institutions whose records they maintain as well as the public, while corporate archives, charged to serve their employees and limited numbers of patrons, are often off-limits to the public. Using the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) definition of *policy* as a “a set of principles and strategies which guide a course of action for the achievement of a given goal” (p. 12), the authors scrutinize problems, in the context of United States history, involving the acquisition, dissemination, legal use, and verification of information. Matters of interest relating to both analog and digital data

include advocacy and copyright, but in the past half-century, the focus has almost exclusively been on the technology of data, involving matters such as cybersecurity, filters, net neutrality, social media, and privacy. With respect to the latter, the Internet has made all information, including personally identifiable information, potentially available electronically. Privacy has unfortunately become transactional; patrons sometimes choose to barter personal details to get greater access to other information. “Digital trails” are difficult to eradicate, for “deleting” material often does not remove it from the Internet, where it remains recoverable by technology experts.

There is a perceived need for stated and referable protocols, as expressed in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights (especially the First Amendment), and Jaeger and Taylor devote considerable attention to the role of presidential administrations in formulating and implementing information policy and the uneasy relationship between public laws and regulations and private sector practices with respect to information. Neoliberalism, with its emphasis on privatization, personal responsibility, and cost efficiency, has arguably required all presidential administrations since Reagan’s to justify themselves initially more in economic than in social terms. At the same time, however, institutions that the government regulates are wise to engage in good bookkeeping practices considering the possibility of continued financial support being dependent on passing rigorous audits.

One apparent oversight in this compendium is the absence of attention to the challenges that older users and researchers confront, including seniors with physical disabilities and those with other additional needs. Together with race, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, age, especially at its later stages, is an important demographic category. While many of these concepts admittedly have been subjects of separate monographs before the publication of this first textbook treatment of contemporary information policy as a whole, the inclusion of a discussion of how information policy can impact older users would have provided readers with a more complete picture of the social and personal implications underlying information policy.

Citations to other works dutifully appear in the main matter, but occasional zappy humor within the citations, especially attempts at amusing asides rather than explanations or continuations of discussions in the chapters, may surprise some readers. Examples of this unexpected (and sometimes distracting) banter include “delightfully, the time between 1917 and 1919 saw a huge spike in checkouts and thefts of public library books related to making alcohol” and “a major advantage of being a librarian now: reduced likelihood of being burned at the stake, at least for professional reasons” (p. 71). After a chapter on a serious discussion of laws on information access, there is a quip in a note alleging that “making lists and litmus tests is when judges feel most alive” (p. 122). These are comments that one expects more often to hear at conferences, but not to read in a professional text. Perhaps the second edition of this book (which the authors suggest we anticipate) will offer more serious and logical annotations. Despite this, the authors nevertheless importantly highlight the capabilities, challenges, conveniences, and quandaries of the digital age.

The book also includes a list of frequently used acronyms, an index, and separate end-notes, and “questions to consider” after each chapter aim to make the text user-friendly. The posed questions not only serve as reviews of each chapter, but can also alert readers to important points to look for if consulted prior to reading the chapters. The book also includes case studies, often presented in colloquial form as anecdotes or apothegms, as well as a selected bibliography featuring many publications and websites that reference the American Library Association but not the Society of American Archivists (SAA) or its regional affiliates. The compilation only mentions SAA briefly on page 145 together with an allied organization, the American Alliance of Museums. While directed primarily at information specialists (i.e., librarians), this work is undoubtedly appropriate as well for archivists, making it an important entry into the ongoing discussions of best practices and policies for knowledge managers.

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