Four Days with Dr. Deming:
A Strategy for Modern Methods
of Management
by William J. Latzko and David M. Saunders
(Addison-Wesley, 1995, 228 pages, $27.95, ISBN 0-201-63366-3)

Whether an IT organization has been involved in TQM (Total Quality Management) for several years, as we have at Emory, or is just beginning to explore and implement this strategy, Four Days with Dr. Deming: A Strategy for Modern Methods of Management, is a resource to consider. After all, what we are all working towards with our organizations began with the foundation laid by Dr. W. Edwards Deming, who initially helped the Japanese turn around their economy, which had been on the verge of collapse following World War II.

Four Days with Dr. Deming explains Deming’s basic TQM philosophy and illuminates the information in some very interesting ways. The book is easy to read and uses an unusual style as it takes the reader through Deming’s four-day seminar. The information is imparted to the reader through three “voices”—one is Dr. Deming; the authors act as a second voice, used for clarification; and an imaginary seminar participant is the third voice. I especially found the seminar participant’s viewpoints helpful, as they demonstrated how new ideas learned might help to solve existing problems in an organization. I could relate to many of those problem situations and how Deming’s message could be applied to solve the problem. Because of the multiple “voice” style, I felt as though I were reading a play and found myself enthralled and eager to see what happened next. This was an interesting way to relate some very basic, “bare facts” kind of information that might normally be dry and somewhat unappealing.

The book not only delves into Deming’s fourteen points or “obligations,” and “seven deadly diseases,” but goes into great detail with his famous red bead and funnel experiments. The book is well illustrated, further clarifying the text. In my opinion, this would be a valuable tool for an organization beginning its total quality journey. I could also see this book being used with a group of senior managers who need to get on board and support their organization’s TQM process. Four Days is easy to read, yet has some powerful messages for all to ponder and understand.

This book was published not long after Dr. Deming’s death. Those of us not fortunate enough to have attended his seminars no longer have that chance, but after speaking with someone who did, I feel that almost as much can be gained from this text, absent the experience of learning from “the master” in person.

Reviewed by Linda A. Chiappe, Director of Special Projects, Office of Quality, Training and Certification, Information Technology Division, Emory University.

Managing Internet Information Services
by Cricket Liu, Jerry Peek, Russ Jones, Bryan Buus, and Adrian Nye

O’Reilly has extended its “Nutshell Handbook” series with a comprehensive how-to book for the newest profession on our staffs: the electronic information specialists. It’s aimed squarely at the intersection of managing electronic information (organizing it, copyright issues, etc.) and servers (Web, ftp, Gopher, etc.) that get the information out. Through and through, it’s practical information and driven by examples. It’s the first book needed by someone adding or taking over an information server, and they’ll keep it open on their desk for the first few months.

Chapter 1 begins with a brief but admirable description of the Internet, and Chapter 2 describes the range of services that can be provided, including finger, ftp, Web, e-mail exploders, Majordomo (UNIX listserv work-alike), Gopher, and WAIS. Each of the services has its own chapters describing the service and giving examples of how to install and configure free versions of each of them. Interspersed is advice on how to arrange information for useful electronic access. Chapter 19 covers Web authoring in detail, and chapters 29 and 30 describe the practical side of legal and intellectual property issues.

The book assumes you’re providing these services on a UNIX system, and that’s a good assumption in our universities. It also assumes the person putting up the services can find his or her way around UNIX at least well enough to follow the copious examples.

The book is up to date in including the capacity and security concerns that have been the most recent headaches for the information providers on staff. There are instructions on configuring servers in ways that don’t leave holes to be exploited. The authors show how to audit usage for capacity projects, and include a first-level tutorial on firewalls at a practical level and tell where to find the Trusted Information Systems free firewall code. Xinetd is also described as a
Firewalls and Internet Security: Repelling the Wily Hacker
by William R. Cheswick and Steven M. Bellovin

Firewalls and Internet Security is not an easy book to read. It is full of rsh’s, UDP’s, inetd’s and an ugly olio of other UNIX entrails. At times the authors become nearly orgasmic describing UNIX logs that to the uninitiated look like random letters over-seasoned with dashes. But the heavy UNIX content is not the scariest thing about this book. That honor goes to the forty-two “truly horrendous” network security risks—each indicated by a sinister black bomb—that are examined in great detail. In case forty-two black bombs don’t scare you enough, the authors cover another hundred or so less horrendous security risks that could also wreak havoc with any of your network connected computers. If you thought that e-mail, WWW, Gopher, MIME, finger, ftp, or any other network service you have ever heard of or used was safe, this book will enlighten you and have you looking over your shoulder and listening for the eerie footfalls of the digital monsters that lurk on the network.

This book may well be too technical for many IT managers. If that includes you, then you should have your network administrators read it and explain it to you. Have them describe your firewall topology (of course you have firewall machines), what your system plan is for protecting sensitive data (of course you have one), and how your system is secure against the threats described in this book or what the plan is to make it so (of course you will do that). Even the least technically adept will want to read page 13 on the lack of security of passwords, page 153 on the intrinsic security flaws of the UNIX operating system, and chapters 12 and 13 on legal issues and encryption.

The authors write from their first-hand experience on the front lines defending the AT&T corporate computer network. This book has the threats, the techniques to break into systems (so that you can understand how you are likely to be attacked), and an overview of the broad issues and technologies necessary to secure network connected computers and defend against the many people who would like to break into your system.

Can your system resist the assaults described in this book? After describing an extended (and ultimately unsuccessful) attack on their corporate system, the authors conclude, “In short, we weren’t ready. Are you?” Firewalls and Internet Security will help you answer that question and do something about the fact that your answer is probably “no.”

Reviewed by Howard Strauss, manager of Advanced Applications at Princeton University. Advanced Applications develops new and novel systems and software based on emerging information technologies.

Bugs in Writing: A Guide to Debugging Your Prose
by Lyn Dupré

I have never been accused of having “good ear.” Of course it was not until I read Lyn Dupré’s new book, “Bugs in Writing,” that I worried about that. Good ear is having the ability to determine good writing simply by listening to it. A person with good ear recognizes awkward constructions, misused words, excess passivity, and all the other myriad of problems in writing without necessarily being able to identify grammatically the exact reason for the problem. Fortunately for all of us prosaic information technology writers, good ear can be developed, and browsing through Bugs in Writing is an excellent way to begin.

Reading Dupré’s introduction is essential to understanding the method to the seemingly mad organization of her book. It is not meant to be read straight through, nor is there any utility in doing so, since there is no logical order of placement. Each writing problem is discussed in a few pages with appropriate examples provided, as well as correctly constructed, often humorous, alternatives. Readers are invited to read a few sections a day at random or to use the well-thought-out indexes to locate areas that discuss...
particular problems that confound them. I think it is greatly to Dupré’s credit that she points out that usage is evolving, that her points are recommendations to be accepted or not, depending on one’s own judgment. She admits that different people with good ear will occasionally disagree as to the proper method of expressing an idea. She also points out that the sound of spoken language is quite different from the sound good ear will discern in written language.

_Bugs in Writing_ is specifically designed for the scientist or technically oriented person who needs to communicate effectively in writing. It includes sections on proper usage in tables, graphs, and figures; captions; equations; and even the ordering of multiple authors of a piece. While this book is especially beneficial for those who are frequently baffled at the proper way to set up such specialty items, the remainder of the book is remarkably useful for anyone who writes. Its first section, for example, deals with passivity and the missing agent, a problem I have unsuccessfully battled for years. Her suggestions offered me new insights into ways to watch for and eventually eliminate this troublesome tendency (my undergraduate professors would be most appreciative).

In sum, I highly recommend _Bugs in Writing_ as a wonderful reference tool for anyone concerned about clear writing. By the way, there is no reward for pointing out the number of times I have violated her principles in this review. My ear is still under development.

Reviewed by Ryan Comfort, Policy Analyst, Office of the Associate Provost, Saint Louis University.

being digital
by Nicholas Negroponte

As professionals involved with information technology, we are constantly facing changes that impact the services we provide and the means of providing them. Nicholas Negroponte’s book, _being digital_ (which appears to be a compilation of his witty columns in _Wired_ magazine), takes us on a guided tour of the future. Negroponte describes how he sees the world and how this vision contains changes in the way we will think, teach, learn, work, and be entertained. His view of the future is based on several assumptions that make sense, including a change in our belief that all matter is composed of atoms. Instead, he proposes that in today’s world, the proper metric is information: bits.

We are limited in our visions for the future by our inability to see beyond existing means and applications. Negroponte takes us a step further, sharing his vision for the future much the way that Marshall McLuhan did in _Understanding Media_.

By now, we have learned that bigger does not necessarily equal better. Systems the size of an end table now provide greater computing power than did the monolithic mainframes of the past. Mass storage capacity and fiber optic cabling have followed the same route. And the difference between computer monitors and television screens will also disappear. Negroponte notes that with changes in speed, compression, and content, succinctness will be closely associated with being “better.”

There will need to be other changes in our value systems. Many of us are subscribers to cable television systems with hundreds of channels available, yet we often find that nothing is worth watching. The quantity of stations and programming and the quality (or resolution) of television video have improved, but the content remains the same, at best. Care must be taken to limit the endless amount of unwanted, unneeded bits of information that are simply overwhelming. Compression algorithms will not solve this problem. Content and conciseness will.

The author is the originator of the “Negroponte Switch.” He believes that information currently being transmitted via the air waves (the ether) will be transmitted via ground-based media and vice versa. This will be a necessity, due to the limitations of air-based transmissions, while there can be a nearly infinite number of fibers. I would add as a corollary to the “Negroponte Switch” his statement that, “Being digital will change the nature of mass media from a process of pushing bits at people to one of allowing people (or their computers) to pull” desired information. As this evolution takes place, there will be a need for intelligent filters or agents to selectively identify information of interest to each individual.

Negroponte says, “The information superhighway may be mostly hype today, but it is an understatement about tomorrow.” Our future will be limited only by the reach of our imaginations and our ability to break out of the thought patterns of today. I highly recommend this book, as it reminds us to think creatively and not limit our thinking to today’s ways of describing the world.

Reviewed by Leslie Maltz, Director of Computing and Communications Resources for the Stevens Institute of Technology, Hoboken, New Jersey. Leslie was recently the Chair of the CAUSE Board of Directors.

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