

# Book Reviews

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Acting Book Review Editor

PROBST, Gilbert; RAUB, Steffen; ROMHARDT, Kai: **Wissen managen. Wie Unternehmen ihre wertvollste Ressource optimal nutzen** (Managing knowledge. How companies use their most valuable resource). Frankfurt: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung; Gabler 2.1998. 414p. ISBN 3-409-29317-5.

The book under review intends to offer a practically minded state-of-the-art-introduction into knowledge-management. The authors Probst, Raub and Romhardt are university trained economists with a sound background in consulting experience. They work together in the Geneva knowledge group which is an organization devoted to problems of knowledge-management. Their university background and the many years in consulting is vivid in the very helpful core principle of their book – the permanent combination of theoretical statements with case examples. These examples refer to solutions of well known companies like Daimler-Benz, Wal-Mart or Mc Kinsey. In addition to that principle there are a couple of other organizing principles which make the reading of the book a pleasure: All chapters consist of advance and post organizers, structuring marginalia, illustrating charts and - particularly important at the end of each chapter there are a couple of questions intended to direct a process of self-reflection on one's own company.

The authors consider knowledge-management as the most important challenge in our modern society. According to their opinion companies will not survive the process of globalisation without this specific capability. In order to meet this challenge they identify eight constituents of effective knowledge-management:

1. *Knowledge objectives*. Objectives are the foundation of knowledge management since they determine the direction of all managerial efforts in the field. For the authors knowledge obviously is an interest relative notion. Knowledge consists of data and facts which are structured and contextualized in order to solve problems.

2. *Knowledge identification*. Identification is concerned with the attainment of transparency. The in-

ternal and external knowledge resources and their contents have to be recognized and comprehended in their relationships.

3. *Knowledge acquisition*. Knowledge acquisition is understood in a very limited way. Basically, the term refers to the purchase of external knowledge which is not internally available.

4. *Knowledge development*. This process deals with the making of knowledge. According to the authors this making of knowledge includes new products, new abilities and more efficient processes. According to my opinion this extends the term knowledge in an unfavourable way. There is no distinction between knowledge and the things which are a product of the application of knowledge.

5. *Knowledge dissemination*. This process is a necessary condition in order to overcome isolated "knowledge islands" in a company. Only by this process knowledge can be made available for the whole company.

6. *Knowledge application*. This is the purpose of knowledge-management. Knowledge has to be made productive for the company.

7. *Knowledge storage*. The problem with knowledge is that once acquired it will not last forever. On the contrary, knowledge tends to fade away and storage is the process which is supposed to prevent this fading.

8. *Knowledge evaluation*. The evaluation of knowledge is only possible in relation to well defined knowledge objectives. There are no objective decontextualized criteria for the evaluation of knowledge.

The whole book is arranged around these eight constituents. Each of these constituents is the topic of one chapter in which one constituent is being dealt with in depth. Since the authors are very much concerned about the implementation of these processes they not only refer to case examples but also to instruments which might be helpful for an implementation. However, the overall message in these chapters is that knowledge management is not only a purely technical matter but also a problem of developing an open minded knowledge culture.

Although I have a couple of minor caveats concerning details and terminology I consider the book

as an inspiring work for those who would like to reflect on the situation of knowledge-management in their company. On top of that it can be used as a "how-to-do-book" for internal workshops dealing with management of knowledge.

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VOGT, Frank: **Formale Begriffsanalyse mit C++**, (Formal Concept Analysis with C++). Datenstrukturen und Algorithmen. Berlin-Heidelberg, etc.: Springer Verlag 1996. 323p., ISBN 3-540-61071-5

The first part of this book presents the mathematical structures of Formal Concept Analysis (FCA) as well as algorithms of the Formal Concept Analysis class library. This combined presentation of the theory of FCA and of its implementation in the ConScript and C++ languages has been very well done. As a result this first part can both be used as an introduction to FCA as such and as an embarkation on its practical application by means of the class library. The (both theoretically and technically) fully covered FAC Field is homogeneous in itself, and here the book constitutes a successful compromise between a broad presentation of the theory and a detailed presentation of individual aspects. Algorithmically ambitious problems such as the drawing of line diagrams are accorded the special room befitting their importance.

The second part, comprising nearly two thirds of the book, deals with the technical transposition of the Formal Concept Analysis class library. Unfortunately, Chapter 9, which presents a general overview of the class library, has turned out rather brief. While the idea of using FCA itself for representing the "used relationship" between the various classes of the library deserves in principle to be welcomed, the resulting line diagram is not too easily readable and hence is presumably less suited for beginners in formal concept analysis. The subsequent description of the various classes with their attributes and operations has been very carefully done and clearly presented, thus offering valuable assistance to the programmer. If page numbers had been indicated at cross-references within the documentation, working with it would have been simplified even more.

In summing up it may be said that the book (together with the class library) offers valuable support to programmers who wish to make use of FCA, even if they have not yet worked with FCA before.

Persons interested only in FCA itself, but not wishing to do any programming themselves, will likewise find the book interesting, but will be able to use it only up to a point. A minor fly in the ointment is the fact that the library, for all the author's efforts to keep it system-independent, cannot e.g. be readily used under MS Visual C++.

Stephan Düwel und Wolfgang Hesse

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NOHR, Holger: **Systematische Erschließung in deutschen Öffentlichen Bibliotheken** (Classificatory Subject Analysis in German Public Libraries). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1996. XI + 140 p., ISBN 3-447-03787-3.

With this further volume, again deserving to be termed well done, in the series "Beiträge zum Buch- und Bibliothekswesen" (Contributions to the Book and Library Field) published by Max Pauer, a volume constituting a supplement (p. IX) to Bernd Lorenz's "Systematische Aufstellung in deutschen wissenschaftlichen Bibliotheken" (Systematic Book Arrangement in German Scientific Libraries, 3rd completely revised and expanded edition, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1995), Holger Nohr does not intend to present a textbook (p. X), although his book might in large parts well be used as such. Rather, his intention was to "present an overview and situational description of classificatory subject analysis in public libraries" (p. X) and to indicate relevant framework conditions, particularly against the background of a changing catalog situation (P. XI). Such presentation is supplied "primarily from the point of view of a catalog-assisted content analysis" performed to serve the "pre-eminent task of classification as an ordering means for book arrangement purposes" (p. 1). As basis for the work serves the - correct - statement that "for public libraries, classificatory subject analysis of the stocks is and remains an absolute necessity" (p. 1).

Remaining outside this overall theme is, however, a classificatory subject analysis of belles-lettres (fiction) (p. 2) and the development of a "comprehensive classification theory" (p. 75), although modern classification theory does find attention (p. 73-87).

Among other things, heterogeneity of the body of users (p. 2 et seq) and a largely absent cooperative subject analysis (p. 3) are found to be the "usual" problems of public libraries. In this connection, classification work is, as the author sees it, impeded by having