

Disaster Management. Societal Vulnerability to Natural Calamities and Manmade Disasters – Preparedness and Response. Indu Prakash. Rashtra Prahari Prakashan, 7/50, Rajendra Nagar, Sector 2, Sahibabad, Ghaziabad. 1994. Price: India Rs 350, elsewhere US \$30. 412 pp.

In this book the author analyses comprehensively the intricacies of emergency preparedness by citing several case studies pertaining to both natural calamities and manmade disasters, and suggests through cogent arguments, the need for formulating plans for disaster management. The book first introduces the subject matter by recounting the consequences of selected major disasters that occurred in the past, and by demonstrating its multifaceted nature, establishes a natural relationship between parameters of the disaster management plan and the nature and extent of vulnerabilities that a given society faces. The book is divided into three parts.

In the first part, a list of major natural disasters, viz. earthquakes, floods, drought, volcanoes, forest fires, coastal hazards and landslides is provided and the various facets of their consequences and the extent of damage caused by these events are presented. Further, the unpredictable nature or difficulties involved in forecasting of these events are discussed.

The second part is devoted to chemical and industrial disasters. The author discusses various kinds of fire, explosion and toxic events possible with these disasters and discusses the role of human error and equipment failures in their fructification. Detailed case studies on Bhopal and Chernobyl incidents are presented to emphasize various local, national and international ramifications of the disasters.

In the last part, different components of disaster management are discussed with emphasis on the role and preparedness of government and international agencies.

The strength of the book lies in providing a wide perspective of disaster management and in focusing on the vulnerable components of emergency plans. The weakness, however, lies in its failure to analyse the frequencies of occurrence of different natural and manmade incidents. This, if done, would have provided a quantitative

handle to plan new industrial sites and to convince the industrial management about the need to consider the natural calamities in the overall risk potential of the installation.

There are grammatical or typographical errors at places but they do not distort or affect the substance of the text.

The book is recommended as a reference source for industrial managers, civil administrators, industrial policy makers and the consultancy groups in industrial risk analysis.

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Stereochemistry of organic compounds – principles and applications (second edition). D. Nasipuri. Wiley Eastern Limited, 4835/24, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110 002. 1991. Price: Rs 200. 564 pp.

Barring a few who are working in research areas steeped deep in stereochemistry, a majority of teachers and students treat this subject as a maze and a necessary evil. On second thoughts, this should sound unnatural, for we live in a three-dimensional world and feel the stereodifferentiation in our day-to-day lives. The problem is probably in the way we start teaching chemistry. At the formative levels, we introduce the subject in a two-dimensional format and at a later stage we develop the third dimension. The problem has been further complicated by the lack of an authoritative text book for teachers for introducing the subject in the correct perspective. The book by E. Eliel served this purpose admirably from the college level onwards up to the level of advanced students in stereochemistry. This vast range had made the volume a treatise for intensive reading. On the other hand, a general text book on organic chemistry finds limited space to do proper justice at an introductory level. An authoritative book bridging the gap has been long overdue. This volume by Prof. D. Nasipuri attempts to fill the gap.

In the book under review, the nightmare called 'nomenclature in stereochemistry of carbon compounds' has been mercifully simplified with the

newer approach now available. The conformation of acyclic and cyclic compounds had been treated sufficiently in detail to be of value to graduate students and teachers. The classical treatment on conformation and reactivity has been dealt with proper examples and illustrations. The author has done well to start the comparatively modern topic of stereodifferentiation reactions with definitions and has followed it up with detailed discussions. Students would find these discussions useful before proceeding to the advanced treatise. The inclusion of pericyclic reactions as a chapter in a book on stereochemistry could be debated. But there could be no doubt on the chapter on molecular recognition. This is a welcome addition which brings in new vistas. The topic is a newly emerging frontier in stereochemistry and chemical reactivity, which attempts to unfold the reactivity of mystic enzymes and factors relating to gene recognition. The concepts on conformation get expanded to larger conformational space in this treatment. The scope of this new frontier has been delineated very well.

Though the discussions throughout the text have been well-illustrated, the illustrations are crowded and the print types chosen do not always bring out the desired contrasts. These are, of course, minor aberrations in the masterly written text book on stereochemistry. The undergraduate and graduate students throughout the world would welcome this book.

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Global Networks. Computers and International Communication. Linda M. Harasim (ed). The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02142, USA. 1994. Price: \$16.95. 411 pp.

When half the world is 'hooked on' global nets, we are still struggling to connect with our counterparts using 'snail mail'. The story of Global Networking takes us back to almost one-and-a-half century when Marco Polo conveyed letters from the church of Rome to the Emperor of China. The major events of telecommunication began around the 1840s when the

'telegraph' came into existence. A little later, in 1875, Alexander Graham Bell rang the 'bell' and then came the first submarine telephone cable in 1956. Telstar, the telecommunication satellite, in 1962 was followed by fibre optic communication in 1977.

Actually, it all began with some brilliant design decisions in the late sixties, when Pentagon scientists were asked to find the best way for an unlimited number of computers to communicate—without relying on any single computer which would take charge of them. It was then that Pentagon decided to bet on a new communication technology called *packet switching*, which came to be known as ARPANET in 1969. ARPANET quickly expanded to dozens of universities and corporations, which added many refinements. These refinements could help people exchange e-mail, retrieve into distant databases, run supercomputers from a distance, brainstorm via electronic bulletin boards and enjoy televirtuality. These innovations in communication protocols are now known to us as the INTERNET. It allows n number of computer networks to link up and act as one.

Our need to communicate and develop new tools to do so forms the history of civilization and culture. Computer networks are recent developments and were immediately adopted by people for communication and adapted into networked spaces, which are new spaces for social, work and educational interaction. Networked spaces offer a new place for humans to meet and promise new forms of social discourse and community. Today, we are only at the threshold of understanding their promises and challenges. The way our network environments are shaped and designed influences the nature and quality of the social space they offer. Social policy

will also determine their role and implications. Social awareness of the need to shape networked spaces and to participate in that process will be essential to ensure that networked spaces enable humanity to express itself in new and hopefully better ways.

This book takes up a host of issues raised by the new networking hi-tech that now links individuals, groups and organizations in different countries and on different continents. Twenty-five contributors, from various parts of the globe, focus on the implementation, application and impact of computer-mediated communication in a global context. Although originally limited to scientific research, computer networks now have an impact on social, educational and business communications. Business applications are now being regularly illustrated in our daily newspapers as part of our post-liberalization boom. Individuals with a personal computer, a modem and some simple software can join a new social community that is *based on interest, not location*. This book provides a clear understanding of the issues, opportunities and pitfalls of this new social connectivity. It looks at how networking technology can support and augment communication and collaboration from such perspectives as policy constraints and opportunities, language differences, cross-cultural communication and social network design.

Basically, it is divided into four major parts, viz. Overview: From technology to community; Issues in globalizing networks; Applications of global networking; and Visions for the future.

Part I introduces and examines the social nature of global networks. The chapters look at networked spaces and network communities to explore human interaction on the networks as technology be-

comes community. In Part 2, issues related to policy, organizational communication and cross-cultural communication are explored from several perspectives, viz. legal, impacts on labour relations, usefulness for a globally competing company, contrasting cultures such as American and Japanese and, finally, security systems for the nets. Part 3 presents and analyses case studies of practical experiences. The contributors, all pioneers in global networking, present their experience within a framework that can provide lessons for other organizations in implementing their own networking ventures. The final four chapters are all set for the future of global networking, viz. future concepts and goals.

The editor, Linda Harasim, holds a doctorate in educational theory from the University of Toronto, and is Associate Professor, Department of Communication, Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada. She has been active for the past decade researching educational and organizational applications of computer networking. She has designed, implemented and evaluated networking applications in Canada, United States and Latin America and was the organizer of the Global Authoring Network (GAN), which linked the contributors of this book.

Altogether, a well-designed book which has been prepared with zeal and gusto, it should be useful to students as well as professionals in information technology.

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