

***Office practice* by F R L N Eksteen, Cape Town: Nasou Publishers, March 1994 (22 chapters, soft cover).**

According to the author, the aim of this book is to enhance the skills of staff employed in the so-called modern or electronic office. The book is divided into 22 chapters dealing with matters such as meetings, communication, commercial documents, cash control, stock and credit control. Those not mentioned here are equally significant.

New trends and developments in the work environment such as teleworking (also known as telecommuting, dominetics and flexiplace) however, are not discussed. The central premise underlying telecommuting is that the information worker is able to employ information technology as the basis for working at a location remote from the central work place on a full- or part-time basis.

It appears that the author is caught between aspects of the old traditional office functions and the appearance of modern equipment and systems in the office of the present day. There is a detailed discussion of Telkom's telecommunication services and the services provided by the Post Office. These discussions can be regarded as interesting, but without really enhancing the skills of the modern office worker. In fact, much of the information contained in these two chapters is readily available from the customer-service divisions of these companies.

New electronic offices are largely doing away with the old traditional administrative ideas discussed in the book, and are using software packages for cash control, stock control and credit control. Mail may now be received via computer and filing is possible on the computer; diaries are kept on computer and messages may similarly be sent.

Several chapters in the book become rather rambling and tedious with the result that one is inclined to lose the "golden" thread mentioned by the author. Nevertheless, this does not imply that the book does not contain valuable and well-informed insights into the world of the clerical office worker. However, the question may be asked "Does the message regarding the gradual shift from the traditional to the modern electronic office really run like a golden thread through all the chapters of this book?" as claimed by the author. There will doubtless be a variety of opinions about this!

What the book does achieve is to draw attention to the large array of factors and multifarious duties that must receive continuous attention in the clerical office of a company. Therefore, it could be read with advantage by all incumbents in the office, and perhaps also by more senior personnel to remind them of what takes place from day to day in that important area of the business. This can only enhance one's grasp of the affairs of the business and improve all-round efficiency.

P A Grobler