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In the following article Professor Jane Humble compares texts that may be suitable for a course in Project Management. Members of DSI are invited to suggest books that should be reviewed in this column and reviewers to review them. Send suggestions to the Feature Editor.

Project Management: Comparison of Two Popular Textbooks

by Jane E. Humble, Arizona State University



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Campus in Mesa, Arizona. She has been a member of the faculty at Arizona State University for about 15 years with teaching and research interests in the areas of project management, ethical issues in technology, quality management, research techniques and leadership. Prior to that, Dr. Humble was on the faculty of DeVry Institute of Technology and Mesa Community College teaching Computer Information Systems with an emphasis in statistical decision making, systems analysis and design and programming. Prior to and during her assignments in academia Dr. Humble worked in the aerospace, large computer systems and electronics industries, with positions including project manager, project engineer, and preliminary design engineer. Her publications include Proceedings of the Decision Sciences Institute, Association of Management, Association of Employee Policy and Procedures, as well as Industrial Management and Journal of Behavior and Information Technology.

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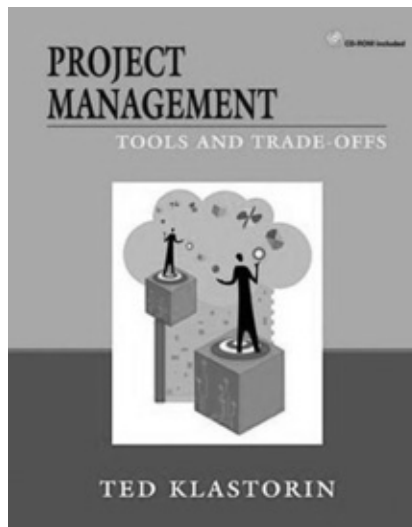
Large and small organizations in manufacturing, government, education, health care, and other services all use project management techniques to organize and control a wide variety of tasks. These tasks and programs include areas such as new product development, product and service improvement, software analysis and design, customer surveys, market testing and analysis, construction of buildings and roadways, political campaigns, sporting events, and many other endeavors. To meet the industry need for well-educated project managers, colleges and universities offer courses in project management (PM) techniques in business, engineering, and technology management curriculums. Two popular new texts published by John Wiley & Sons are *Project Management: Tools and Trade-offs*, by Ted Klastorin, and *Core Concepts: Project Management in Practice* (2nd ed.), by Mantel, Meredith, Shafer, and Sutton. Both of these texts are reasonably priced, include CDs with popular Microsoft Project, risk management software, and have similar chapters covering the basics of project management from project start-up to termination. However, differences between the texts, such as approach, chapter contents, additional software provided and online student and instructor resources, are important to consider in textbook selection; these differences are the focus of this review.

Approach

The general approach of the two texts is different in several ways. Klastorin states that he has written his text for use in an elective course for the MBA program at the University of Washington and that it emphasizes the trade-offs between PM methods and their applicability to solve real-world complex problems. The methods for students to calculate and analyze project alternatives, by hand and with EXCEL spreadsheets, are presented along with the links between theory and practice. In the preface, Klastorin also states that his goals are to “present the fundamental concepts of project management . . . with an emphasis on the difficult trade-offs that must be made . . . to describe the tools and methodologies that have been developed . . . to show how these tools and methodologies can be extended to deal with more realistic problems, and to integrate . . . research into PM educational materials.” The text includes problems and cases to accompany most chapters along with the “New Product Development Game,” a role-playing game included on the supplementary CD, to illustrate concepts and project management techniques presented in the chapters. Most chapters present research topics; however, the majority of the studies cited are from the 1980s and 1990s, making applicability to today’s PM problems

somewhat problematic. Although the text could be used for a senior-level PM course, it is better suited for a graduate-level or executive course, where a high-level look at concepts is more important than learning to use practitioners' tools such as Microsoft Project and risk analysis software. But Klasterin states at the beginning that his intent is not to teach use of software tools but the theory behind various tools and methodologies.

Mantel et al's approach is more practitioner oriented, with a detailed presentation and explanation of how to use popular PM tools and techniques for addressing problems commonly faced in real-world projects. The text presents the formulas and theory behind PM methodology, but that is not the primary focus. Mantel expects that students graduating with this course will be ready to go into industry with the skills needed to use computers to crunch the numbers and to analyze alternative courses of action for projects they will be working on. Numerous material review questions and problems are presented to accompany the chapters, along with cases and articles to illustrate concepts presented in the chapters. At Arizona State University, we have found that students generally enjoy and do well in the PM course using this text or Mantel and Meredith's other popular text, *Project Management: A Managerial Approach* (Wiley, 2003), and are immediately able to step into project management positions and be successful. This practitioner approach with computer problem-solving is appealing to both undergraduate and graduate students, and is also appreciated by members of our industry advisory board, who have stated they need "job-ready graduates" who have the skills to provide quick, correct solutions to daily problems faced in industry. Although clearly valuable, the theoretic support for mathematical computations and development of software tools becomes less important to practitioners who are daily faced with solving immediate management problems.



Chapter Contents and Software Provided with Text

Project management methodology, problem-solving tools, and mathematical techniques are presented in both texts. Topics include the project life cycle, history of PM, use of Microsoft Project (commonly used project selection models), project portfolio evaluation, risk analysis, earned value analysis, project control systems, resource allocation, project audit and project termination.

Klasterin's text is more detailed in its presentation of formulae and hand computations, and suggests use of EXCEL spreadsheet solutions, Microsoft Project, and @RISK simulation software to accompany Microsoft Project. The book lacks detailed descriptions of how to use the software. The textbook package includes a CD containing Microsoft Project 2002, @RISK software, and a number of EXCEL spreadsheets to solve problems presented in the textbook.

Mantel et al's text presents detailed, step-by-step use of Microsoft Project, EXCEL, and Crystal Ball (CB) risk analysis software used with EXCEL. Unfortunately, some of the CB instructions in the textbook were incorrect for the version of the software that came with the latest edition of the text. However, once installed, CB was not difficult to figure out and it was found to be quite useful for risk analysis. The Man-

tel text includes minimal attention to hand calculations, which is acceptable for practitioners who generally have access to computers. As an aid to solving real-world problems, Mantel includes substantial coverage of behavioral topics, such as team building, selection of personnel for different PM roles, running effective meetings, negotiation and conflict resolution, and a tutorial on statistics. End-of-chapter exercises, problems, articles and cases are much more extensive in the Mantel text than in Klasterin's text.

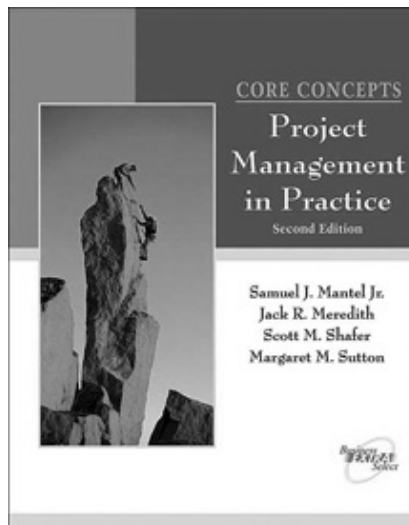
Student and Instructor Resources Provided Online

Mantel's website at www.wiley.com/college/mantel for both students and instructors has a set of downloadable PowerPoint slides, sample quiz and test questions, and an online help desk. For instructors, additional resources include a test bank, solutions to homework problems and cases, and teaching guidelines for the chapters. However, the Crystal Ball software provided with the text was found to be difficult to set up and use. Installation required Internet access and assignment of a single unique user code. The CB online support site was not available on the weekend and the assigned code could only be used on one PC, making it very difficult to use the software at the office, in the classroom, and at home, unless one only uses a laptop and carries it back and forth. This can be a serious problem for instructors, and also for many students who go back and forth between desktop PCs. The online help for Crystal Ball was not found to be helpful. Additionally, Wiley online support was unable to help with setup and installation problems. Students in the Fall 2005 Project Management class at ASU were given the assignment to install and use Microsoft Project, EXCEL, and Crystal Ball during the first week of class. Students all reported difficulty installing Crystal Ball and only one reported that the telephone support was friendly and helpful.

Klastorin's website at www.wiley.com/college/klastorin has adequate resources for students and instructors, including downloadable PowerPoint slides to accompany each chapter in the text and solutions to homework problems and cases. Klastorin includes @RISK software and Microsoft Project 2002, but does not provide much instruction in the text on how to use these products. The README files on the software disks accompanying the text were not very helpful. Wiley provides the online help desk for software problems, which was already discussed as being inadequate. The installation problems encountered with Crystal Ball were not found with @RISK nor for Microsoft Project 2002 because they are provided as complete "Student Editions" with a 120-day use period, are licensed to textbook owners, require no special code, and have no restrictions on PC installation. Documentation and tutorials for the software were found to be adequate, making additional online help less important.

Conclusions and Recommendations

All things considered, both textbooks are valuable for teaching project management, but exhibit limitations. Mantel et al provides more value for



students who want to be job-ready when they graduate, able to tackle typical problems working with project teams, and equipped with the skills to use Microsoft Project and EXCEL to solve daily problems managing people, scheduling tasks, allocating resources and reporting progress to upper management and customers. However, since risk management is an important aspect of project management, a more user-friendly student version of Crystal Ball is needed, with instructions for installation and use on the program CDs, not

in the text. This would assure that instructions match the current version of the software.

Klastorin provides value to executives and high level managers who need to understand problems faced by project managers in their organization, but who probably do not need to actually solve problems themselves using the PM software tools.

Web Site References

Klastorin's website with resources for students and instructors, including downloadable PowerPoint slides to accompany each chapter in the text and solutions to homework problems and cases: <http://www.wiley.com/college/klastorin>

Mantel's website for both students and instructors with a set of downloadable PowerPoint slides, sample quiz and test questions, and an online help desk: <http://www.wiley.com/college/mantel> ■

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The "Paperboy Problem" of the DSI Annual Meeting Luncheon

The "paperboy problem" of the annual meeting meal functions: The registration process for meal functions during the Annual Meeting is really the classic "paperboy" problem of inventory theory. When people pre-register in late spring or the summer, they indicate whether they will attend the Sunday buffet lunch and/or the Tuesday awards luncheon. As the meeting approaches, many change their minds because of airline reservations, or even because of the weather on the day of

the meal function. History shows that anywhere from 40 to 91 percent of the people who say they will attend the meal function actually do so. For example, at a recent Institute Annual Meeting, 877 people said they would attend the Tuesday awards luncheon. The Institute committed to the hotel for 625 meals, but only 385 people actually ate a meal. The result was that the Institute was charged \$25 for each of the 240 meals not eaten, for a total loss of \$4,000. If we had committed for all

877 meals, the loss would have been even larger \$12,300. The Board does not believe that we are good stewards for the membership if we allow such waste, and so we seek that illusive middle ground where everyone gets served without too many wasted meals. It is the Institute's policy that if a person is unable to be seated at a meal function, he or she will be reimbursed if they present the meal ticket to the Institute's staff at the time of the meal function. ■