

Book review

International Case Studies in Asset Management

Edited by Chris Lloyd. ICE Publishing, London, UK, 2012, ISBN 978-0-7277-5739-5, £40 (paperback), 304 pp.

Good management of assets is vital for all organisations, and particularly so when the capital asset base is the principal means of an organisation's service delivery. Chris Lloyd's book of case studies in asset management follows on from his previous book, which discusses the whole-life management of physical assets (C. Lloyd (2010) *Asset Management: Whole-Life Management of Physical Assets*, Thomas Telford, London, UK).

The book provides 17 case studies. Fourteen of the case studies are specific to five countries (Australia, Canada, France, Ireland, UK) and three cover operations in more than one country. Three case studies are in water supply, three are concerned with ports or airports, three are concerned with rail, four are about the provision of civic services including utilities supply and cultural buildings, two are concerned with power supply, one with mining and one case study is generic. Each study is relatively short and is covered by typically eight to 12 pages.

The book is divided into three sections. Section 1 provides six case studies by way of an introduction to asset management, section 2 is concerned with transformations of organisations to focus on asset management and section 3 is concerned with the linkages between governance and delivery.

As the editor appears to admit in the introduction, some case studies are more informative than others. The best are those that provide detail, often through simple bullet-pointed lists of data or organisational charts. These may be about such things as job roles, or organisational processes. Others, while less informative about the detail, tell a good story about organisational change after previous failings, and these seem to come mainly from the rail industry.

A clear message emerges from all the studies: to be successful in managing large capital assets, an organisation's whole focus must be on the

acquisition of sufficient high-quality data about the assets, stored in a way that can be analysed, with a clear understanding of the risk to service delivery of failures in any part of the asset. Case studies are excellent at providing tips and hints, and the following are just a few that were particularly interesting: move beyond a manufacturer's recommendations on maintenance to develop one's own recommendations based on risk of failure (Dublin Airport); all asset decisions are a function of the service strategy (arts buildings in the state of Victoria); minimise data entry requirements to minimise error (city of Cambridge in Canada); investigate correlations between failure (e.g. pipe bursts) and the sources of failure (e.g. cast iron pipes, city of Cambridge).

A very interesting case study from the city of Hamilton in Canada discusses the issue of intergenerational fairness in asset investment. The authors point out that, while the change from one generation to the next may take 25–30 years, assets last much longer. Their profile of required investment may lead to some generations being unduly burdened by renewal or maintenance costs.

The concluding chapter begins with an apposite quote from Voltaire that society should 'judge a man (sic) by his questions rather than by his answers', and this quote suitably reinforces a long list of helpful questions suggested at the beginning of chapter 17. This chapter discusses the relation between technical and financial asset management, and the questions raised are typical of those asked by senior executives in capital-intensive organisations. A student of asset management would do well to review them closely.

Overall, the book provides a helpful range of case studies by type of organisation and type of service offered. While it is well indexed, the book might also have benefitted from a matrix in the initial chapter that identifies by category the issues that each case study covers. This would have made the book a little more usable as a reference source.

John Parkin