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BOOK REVIEWS

The Management of Business Logistics
John J. Coyle, Edward J. Bardi, C. John Langley, Jr.
(St. Paul, Minnesota: West Publishing Company)
5th edition (1992). 580 pages. \$50.50
ISBN 0-314-93364-6

Improvements

My first browse through the 5th edition highlighted what users anticipate: new and current examples from actual companies, and tables and graphs that have been updated to the most recently available information (which, for transportation and logistics activities, can be a chore). The 80s decade is reflected in both content and terminology. The transportation chapters include the expected changes and even a page devoted to the Maislin decision. "Supply Chain Management" has become a separate chapter as has "Logistics Quality." The authors don't dwell too much on contemporary buzz-words, although Dr. Demming et al. are referred to as "gurus."

The second impression from Edition 5 is that the chapters and sections aren't where they used to be. Physically, the chapters are of more similar lengths, from 6 to 7 percent of the total text pages each and they have returned to a semester-fitting 15 chapters. The authors have done far more than simply update their material; they have re-integrated it, recognizing that some of the last chapters on strategic planning and future perspectives in the previous edition did appear "tacked-on."

Along with a set of study questions, most chapters include one or two brief cases. Seven comprehensive case studies follow the final chapter. Other welcome additions, making this edition more than just another textbook, are compilations of logistics publications and associations preceding the existing glossary. Students will find this material more useful as their careers progress.

The new organization fits together fairly smoothly. "Global Logistics," greatly strengthened and moved up to Chapter 4 (from Chapter 12 in the fourth edition), following "Supply Chain Management" as Chapter 3, finishes a broad framework in Part I before the more detailed topics of inventory and transportation in Parts II and III. These two groups of chapters are keyed to the **systems** of information, inventory and transportation, and **management decisions**, respectively. (The chapter on "Logistics Information Systems" has been moved to lead-off Part II, separating it by 8 chapters from "Organization of the Logistics Function," which followed it in the 1988 edition. Using the philosophy that organizational form governs information flow, some instructors may still assign these chapters as an integrated pair.) The chapters in Part IV may be viewed more as **staff activities** than line management. Chapter 12, "Facility Location," has an improved title over the former "Nodal Locations" and retains the useful appendix summarizing the classical theories.

Future Considerations

Having taught from the earlier editions, I recognized some old picayune details that still might be improved the next time around. Chapter 1 has always included a fixed vs. variable cost problem that might better fit a succeeding chapter that one providing a logistics "overview". (The problem serves more to scare off those students whose math skills would benefit from attention to this exercise--but let's get them immersed in the course first.)

The authors say (page 49) that "logistics frequently is called the other half of marketing," (although in earlier editions this read "sometimes called . . ."). With the more developed focus of each field, this phrase should at least be stated in the past tense and probably footnoted or deleted.

The transportation chapter provides three more examples that might be cleaned up in future editions. First, the modal comparison chart (page 285) has never rated pipelines for transit time, reliability, accessibility and security; other texts do not find this a problem. Second, regardless of whether from an actual example or a transposing error, the class rate table (page 333) would certainly be easier to explain during lectures if the class 50 rates actually were 50 percent of the class 100 rates, the class 45 were 45 percent, and so on. A third, more minor irritant, is the continued use of a diagram of intermodal services that refers to "birdyback," a term virtually unused outside this text, making it neither cute nor accurate.

The new art work is generally good, notably the larger graphs showing the tapered rate effects. This accuracy was not re-applied to the older total cost graphs which remain less-than-accurate sketches (e.g., page 205). A map showing landbridge concepts (page 126) and a drawing of a forklift truck (page 392) both require further explanation of their labels in the text.

Summary

This 5th edition is more complete, up-to-date, and readable than its successful predecessors. Its chapters are more successfully arranged as a logical body of logistics knowledge. The physical appearance has also been tightened without resorting to the high cost of multiple colors as found in many texts designed for basic business courses. (This last clause begs the question of whether or not logistics is a basic business course: it should be. Enough said.) It will be a good adoption for

established transportation and logistics programs with an integrating course (possibly preceding a case-work course), as well as for schools with one management-oriented course in this area.

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