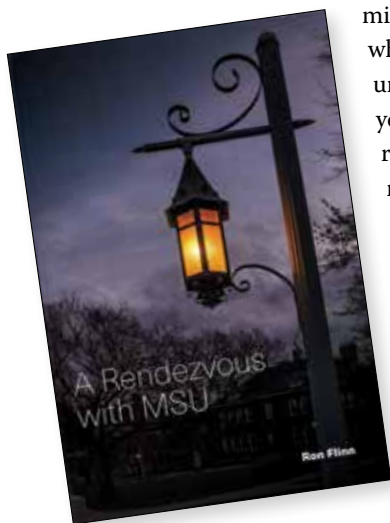


Book Review Editor: Theodore J. Weidner, Ph.D., P.E., CEFM, AIA

Higher education has a profound influence in the United States in the way it responds to and shapes the nation's needs. It responds to the demands of the populace for a variety of reasons. What drives the education industry and how it responds are presented in the two books reviewed in this issue.

A RENDEZVOUS WITH MSU

Ron Flinn, Michigan State University Press, East Lansing, MI, 2016, 152 pp., hardcover, \$24.95.



Those working in higher education are familiar with long-term employees; it's a field where 40 years of service is rare but not unusual. Very few people spend over 50 years with an institution, particularly when rising to the top of the administration of a major public research institution. Fewer still write about what occurred over those 50-plus years. Fortunately, Ron Flinn fits into the category of attending, working, and rising through the ranks, as well as writing about the physical growth of Michigan State University. It is a firsthand account of the growth of higher education facilities, which has been more broadly described in the works of Harvey Kaiser.

Beginning in 1855, Michigan Agricultural College became the first land-grant institution following the passage of the Morrill Act of 1862. MSU developed gradually over 100 years, as it served the residents of the state and others. By 1957, when the author arrived on campus, Michigan State College had become Michigan State University (formally the Michigan State University of Agriculture and Applied

Science). *A Rendezvous with MSU* covers one-third of the physical development of the MSU campus. It was, and remains, a dynamic institution.

A past APPA President and long-time APPA member, Flinn chronicles the physical growth and operating challenges of a major research university under the leadership of John A. Hannah, and as it continued with subsequent campus leaders. The challenges of budget, temporary facilities, utilities, energy efficiency, staffing, and minorities are just some of the topics covered and described from a personal perspective. He also chronicles his relationships with a wide range of colleagues at the campus, including faculty, staff, neighbors, and business people: who succeeded, who struggled, who behaved well, and who suffered from poor treatment. These stories make the book memorable and help avoid an otherwise dry listing of buildings and dates.

Rendezvous may initially have limited appeal to people unrelated to MSU. If so, it will be their loss. While specifically written about a single campus, *Rendezvous* presents many stories familiar to facility officers and describes the human/humanitarian elements of the job and campus life.

THE RACE BETWEEN EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2008, 496 pp., hardcover, softcover, e-book, from \$9.

Nearly every facility manager struggles with the changing demands of the primary organization (the customers) and the tools needed to support the facility operation and primary organization. In 1975, Gordon Moore predicted the doubling of computing power every year or so, which still seems to be holding true.

That often means that as soon as a new PC is installed and working smoothly, it is already out of date. Nevertheless, we have come to rely on this increase in computing power to increase our overall productivity.


Those same facility managers struggle with the expectation for productivity increases (or at least value

increases). The construction industry has the same problems; productivity in construction has changed little. The gap between overall productivity increases and those of the facility industry simply increases pressure on facility managers to “do more with less.” As we attempt to find ways to increase productivity and value, we must also understand some of the root causes of this situation.

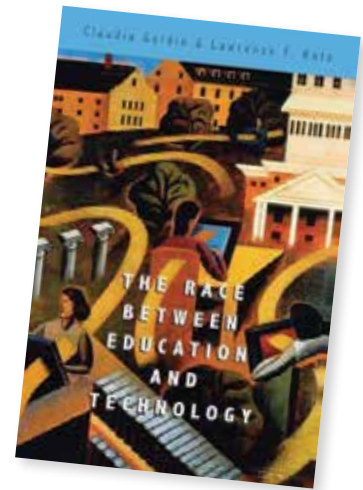
One element contributing to those root causes is described in *The Race between Education and Technology*. The authors develop their analysis from data beginning in colonial times by considering societal expectations for minimum educational attainment to be employed in a job that puts one in the middle class. In a preindustrial, agrarian society, elementary education was considered sufficient. The United States was unique in its provision of free elementary education to residents, which powered its advances in economic strength prior to World War I. As the country made greater economic advances, society demanded secondary education to achieve or maintain a position in the middle class.

Similarly, although further propelled by the GI Bill of 1944, society began to expect (at least some) postsecondary education as a requirement for personal economic advancement. The increasing demand for postsecondary education was reflected in the rapid increase in facilities to serve that demand, as documented by Harvey Kaiser and others. Now, we also see a political compulsion for completion of postsecondary education (BA/BS) and some interest in postgraduate attainment to maintain a position in the middle class. What will this mean for education facility managers? Barring the discussion about “free higher education,” will there be more facilities to construct and maintain, or will other solutions be found? This question is unanswered.

As mentioned above, *The Race* is an in-depth study about education in the United States. It is not a soft or quick read; it is a significant research effort that looks at the economic ties between the U.S. education system and its societal drivers. It may not be appropriate for the majority of readers here, but those who are interested in the subject, or those who want to see how researchers tackle data, should find it very interesting.

Predicting the future of higher education facilities from this or any economic study is difficult. But it is useful to understand how we got here, and some of the expectations society places on the education industry—of which facility managers are an integral part. 

Ted Weidner is an associate professor at Purdue University and consults on facilities management issues primarily for educational organizations. He can be reached at tjweidne@purdue.edu. If you would like to write a book review, please contact Ted directly.



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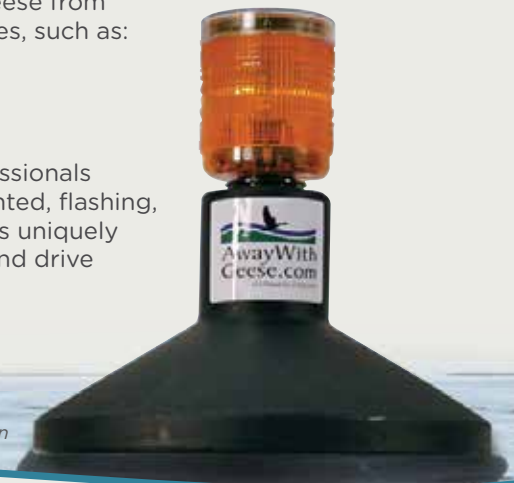
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