This book consists of an international collection of qualitative studies on a wide range of topics related to knowledge management, knowledge-intensive work and knowledge-intensive organizations. The first thing I noticed about the book when I received it, was that this certainly represented a significant endeavour: 640 A4 sized pages containing 33 papers. I am pleased to say that this is not as daunting as it sounds as the work is divided into 7 more or less equal sections that clearly focus on one specific area. Further signposting occurs towards the beginning of the book, where each chapter receives a paragraph of additional description.

The character of any book of this kind is set by the people involved. As well as the Editors, from sound backgrounds in Poland (Jemielniak/Kozminski) and the UK (Kociatkiewicz/Essex), there is a strong Editorial Advisory Board with representatives for Lund, Kyoto, Vaxjo, Kozminski, Cornell and MIT adding to the international flavour. Turning to the authors, the international spread is similar, with strong representation from the UK, USA/Canada, mainland Europe/Scandinavia and outside that, just one paper from India. This mix is obviously reflected in the style and content of the studies presented, which by and large report research in the country in question. Overall, however, many of the chapters are shorter in length than would be needed to fully report primary research (although some do) and concentrate instead on developmental or conceptual aspects of the research.

Not surprisingly, as with most collections of papers, however well-focussed, the book covers an eclectic mix of topics, with an indicative (though not comprehensive) list of 11 on the back cover. These include, for example, the over-arching ‘Knowledge Management’, some theoretical viewpoints (actor-network theory, autopoiesis), some practitioner concerns (Risks of outsourcing), as well as perspectives on the role of language and narrative knowing. Contexts too vary widely, with studies on,
among others, universities, consulting agencies, corporations and high-tech start-ups. This diversity should be seen as a strength rather than a weakness however: because the book is so well referenced, at the end of each chapter, as well as at the end, it is possible to make inroads into a wide range of literatures using the book as a starting point.

The book commences with a Table of Contents (overview, then annotated), followed by a brief foreword from the editors where the significance of Knowledge-Intensive Organisations to the burgeoning knowledge economy is pointed out. It is also noted that the field is beset by ill-defined terminologies and paradoxes. While it is recognised that one text cannot solve these issues, the authors set out to provide here at least an introduction to the field. This is followed by a short Preface which explains the seven sections that form the main body of the book.

The first section covers ‘learning and innovation’, how they arise, how they might be analysed and how they shape contemporary organizational realities. The second, ‘language of knowledge’ considers the discourse surrounding knowledge and the language used to learn, innovate and share experiences. These foundational sections are followed by ‘Managing Knowledge’. The fourth section takes a critical stance by examining the theme of ‘management and control’, considering issues of knowledge sharing and organizational control. The fifth section, ‘the culture of knowledge’ takes the scene to the broader social context, while remaining focussed on managerial practices in organizations. Next, ‘knowledge workers’ in the knowledge economy are considered. The final section, ‘discussing knowledge’ revisits the major themes of the volume. The sections presented in the Preface would have benefited from a little more explanation as to why they had been chosen and separated in this way. At times it was not always clear as to why a certain paper had appeared in one section and not another. But, this is a minor criticism, and this issue is perhaps inevitable in such a diffuse and fragmented field, with so many lenses, methodologies and perspectives.

The book styles itself as a Research Handbook without specifying a particular audience. Priced at around £170, clearly it is intended for library or institutional purchase, rather than for individuals. As a lecturer, I would certainly find it useful in seminar sessions as many of the conceptual elements could be used to support classroom discussions. This possibility is helped by the fact that some of the chapters are quite short and do not get overly bogged down in detail. Many useful diagrams can be found, that again are helpful in teaching situations. However, the real purpose of buying the book would be to provide a fast-track into the literatures of the subjects in question, particularly given that the field is interdisciplinary, and useful material may be found in a wide range of sources. It would therefore be of most use to academic researchers concerned with knowledge management specifically, or beyond that, for MBA or other Masters students in the wider fields of management and/or information systems, particularly during the production of a thesis or dissertation.

To conclude, the Editors should be congratulated on bringing together a strong international team together, to present such a rich mix of papers in this fascinating area that is so significant for the future.

Lorraine Warren is a senior lecturer in entrepreneurship and innovation, and director of Postgraduate Education at the University of Southampton’s School of Management. Her research interests include the emergence of new technologies and business models in the digital economy.