

Managing the Skies - Public Policy, Organization and Financing of Air Traffic Manage- ment

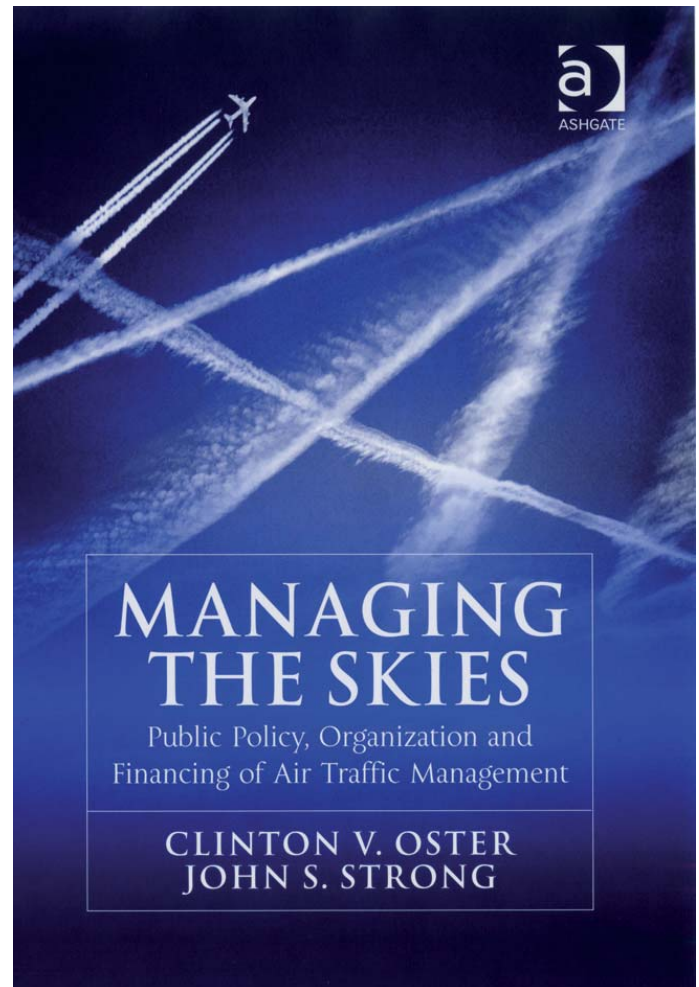
By Clinton V. Oster and John F. Strong

A book review by Ruwantissa Abeyratne

This book, authored by two distinguished experts on the subject of air traffic management and finance and economics respectively, reflects a balanced blend of professional experience and academic research. This fusion serves the reader well in obtaining a thorough understanding of air traffic management in the introduction to the book, which acts as an enabler towards understanding a wide spectrum of air traffic systems and their complex technical aspects, which are explained in clear, unpretentious and eminently comprehensible language.

It is also a work of scholarly caution where the authors have, through a sustained look at the air navigation service provider and the many challenges faced by the industry, created a compellingly useful and necessary repository of well documented studies, through which emerge a logically reasoned and au fait treatise that brings out the purpose of the book. It becomes evident as one progresses well into the book that its purpose is to examine the global air traffic management system through its component elements and provide the reader with a well rounded discourse on the subject.

In general terms, the book's greatest strength is its eminent readability, brought to bear by the skilful use of layman's language by the authors, which is calculated to provide the reader with the assurance of learning. The facts are sound and analyses are well supported. Another asset of this work is the manner in which the contents are organized, to flow logically and sequentially, leading to a conclusion that would leave the reader content in having had a well rounded and sound exposure to the subject and a profound understanding of how air traffic management is practiced globally. There is also a professional discussion on lessons learnt, which abundantly brings out the practical value of the book.



The book comprises of five sections, the first of which sets the stage with one of the best discussions on the air traffic control system that I have read. It contains three chapters, the first providing a brief but well researched and meticulously documented discussion on the global air traffic control challenge. The authors identify this challenge in three to four pages, without taxing the reader with a lengthy discourse on the dichotomy of an exponentially growing air transport industry and the strains of the air traffic management system. The second chapter in this section explains in a lucid and structured manner, how the air traffic system works.

The third chapter includes a discussion on regulatory issues as well as a numerical categorization of the dimensions of performance for air navigation service providers. These performance aspects, which are a must-read, are repeated later on for emphasis in Section Five, Chapter 18. They are totally consistent with the performance goals identified by ICAO and reflect well the current expectations of the global aviation community.

Section Two has four chapters, which elaborate on international experiences in mature aviation markets such as Australia and New Zealand, leading into the Third Section and six fascinating chapters therein, analyzing the various air traffic management systems across the globe, touching on developing countries and States of such variance as the Russian Federation, China, India, Canada and regions such as South America and Africa. The currency of the research is only matched by the dexterity of analysis and the depth of knowledge the authors exhibit in discussing these disparate environments.

Section Four is devoted entirely to the United States in three comprehensive chapters which include a discussion on reform of the air traffic management system in the country. I found the discourse informative and revealing, where the authors have engaged themselves in frank and constructive analyses.

Section Five has two chapters on labor issues and an inquiry into lessons learned and challenges for the future. The book contains a rich glossary, a substantial bibliography and a comprehensive index. What more can one ask for?

About the authors

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