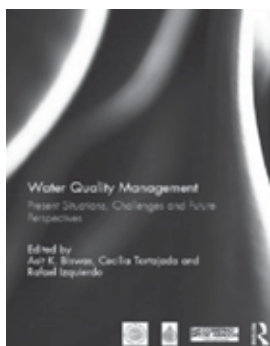


Reviews and resources



Water Quality Management: Present Situations, Challenges and Future Perspectives

Edited by Asit Biswas (Third World Centre for Water Management, Mexico), Cecilia Tortajada (International Centre for Water and Environment, Spain), and Rafael Izquierdo (Aragon Water Institute, Spain)

2011, Routledge, 282 pages, hardback only, £85.00
ISBN 9780415688857

This book focuses on a topic of growing concern, which is that of water quality management. Although much has been written and discussed about the need for adequate supply, little attention is paid to the characteristics of the liquid being supplied as well as the major implications of its discharge into the environment. In fact, water that is not of the appropriate quality for the intended use can be at times more harmful than beneficial. With organizations around the globe struggling to meet the 2015 Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of the population without access to 'safe' drinking water and sanitation, admittedly a supreme challenge, the book is timely and comes to fill

an important gap in the vast literature of water management.

The scope is broad; ranging from studies on agricultural impact, financing issues, policy, and technical aspects, intertwined with some vivid examples of successful water quality management in several regions of the world. The editors, with a prestigious trajectory of work in the field, have done a good job of providing an adequate regional balance in this most international of subjects, covering case studies from Latin America, Europe, South Africa, China, and Egypt.

These topics are presented as a wide spanning collection of articles, which in terms of presentation lack a coherent structure. A lack of consistency in style is also observed; ranging from 'high-level' academic and technical articles on the one side, mixed with a series of papers presented by international institutions or regional authorities. The latter, which are based predominantly on official government reports, at times ring more of official propaganda rather than a detailed scientific analysis of water quality issues. These contributions could have been well served by a more thorough proofreading, as well

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as a solid peer review by a panel of experts, to provide a more consistent quality of the articles.

All in all, the student or professional in the field can find a good reference source here, selecting the individual articles that may suit his or her interest best. Although the cost is somewhat prohibitive for the average student in a developing country, libraries and research institutions would be well served by having this book available for their researchers, given the ample amount of data and case studies collected in one volume.

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**Under Wraps: A History
of Menstrual Hygiene
Technology**

Sharra L. Vostral
2011, Lexington Books
202 pages, US\$18.95
ISBN 9780739113868

To date, professionals in neither the sanitation nor hygiene sectors have paid sufficient attention to menstruation. It has long been a taboo subject, kept under wraps, but this is changing.

Under Wraps: A History of Menstrual Hygiene Technology is an account of the social history of menstrual hygiene in America. It reports the changing attitudes to the biology and

psychology of menstruation, and the efficacy of menstrual hygiene technologies (such as pads and tampons).

Vostral reveals how technologies have been used at specific cultural moments to subvert a discourse that depicts menstruation as both a problem (a liability) and a disease (a debility). For instance, during the Second World War, female pilots became adept at concealing menstruation in order to keep their jobs. And Vostral reports a surge in tampon use at this time associated with women's entry into employment.

Vostral considers how social attitudes and perceptions about menstruation and technologies have changed over time. Now that American women and girls are expected to participate in society, work, and school during their menses, menstruation has come to be viewed primarily as a hygiene problem, requiring an efficacious technology. Vostral explores how such technologies have been used both practically as effective absorbents (and how women gained the knowledge and skills to use them) but also strategically as a means to 'hide the evidence' of menstruation. In this way menstrual hygiene technologies can be tools for empowerment: to change norms about rest and curtailment of activities during menses and linked to the increased agency, mobility, freedom, and status of women.

Vostral shows how advertising campaigns supporting the commercialization of products have created the expectation that for women to manage their menstruation more efficiently the purchase of menstrual hygiene products is necessary. We can see the start of a similar trend in many countries in Africa and Asia.

This book tells an interesting social history that is also of relevance to work in the WASH sector. As they live longer and have fewer pregnancies, women today will have more menstrual periods. WASH practitioners are increasingly aware that facilities enabling improved menstrual management have a role to play

in enabling more girls to stay in school past puberty and more women to stay in the workplace. Menstrual hygiene management options have implications for the design of sanitation programmes – for example in terms of pit filling rates or sewerage design.

In addition to the supplies of absorbent materials, fundamentally, menstrual hygiene requires other facilities to be in place such as clean toilets, facilities for washing, drying, and disposing of absorbent material, and access to facilities for hand-washing and bathing as well as clean water.

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