The Workflow Management Coalition (WfMC) was founded in August of 1993. It is a non-profit, international organization of workflow vendors, users, analysts and university/research groups. The Coalition’s stated mission is “to promote and develop the use of workflow through the establishment of standards for software terminology, interoperability and connectivity between workflow products.” The WfMC currently consists of some 300 members, worldwide.

Each year, for the past several years, Layna Fischer, the general manager of the WfMC has edited a handbook that brings together the best articles on the current state of the workflow market. Each of these volumes consists of a section on the workflow market and new technologies, a section on workflow related standards work, and a directory of the membership of the WfMC. This volume follows that pattern.

Jon Pyke, the Chair of the WfMC, kicks off the volume by providing a Foreword and surveys the development of the workflow market in 2004. He notes that in the previous year there was quite a bit of conflict between the meaning of workflow and BPM and a proliferation of new standards. This past year, however, the field seems to have settled down quite a bit. There is still come disagreement over the proper use of BPM, but otherwise, the standards are in various committees and everyone seems willing to wait to decide which are needed. The WfMC, meantime, continues to develop and promote its various standards.

The contents of the 2005 volume includes:

- Foreword, Jon Pyke
- Introduction, Layna Fischer

Section 1 - The World of Workflow

- Workflow in the World of BPM: Are They the Same? Charlie Plesums, WfMC Fellow, US
- BPM -- Too Much BP, Not Enough of the M. Derek Miers, Enix Consulting, UK
- Integrated Functino and Workflow - Chris Lawrence, Old Mutual, South Africa.
- Business Process Improvement Through Optimization of its Structural Poperties. Vladimir Modrak, Technical University of Kosice, Slovakia
- Narrowing the Semantic Gap Between Business Process Analysis and Business Process Execution. Dr. Setrag Khoshafian, Pegasystems, Inc. US
- Workflow and Business Rules -- A Common Approach. Heinz Lienhard and Urs-Martin Kunzi, ivyTeam-SORECOGroup, Switzerland
• State of BPM Adoption in Asia. Ken Loke, Bizmann System (S) Pte Ltd., and Dr. Pallab Saha, Institute of Systems Science, National University of Singapore.

Section 2 -- Workflow Standards

• Workflow and Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA). Arnaud Bezancon, Advantys, France.
• An Example of Using BPMN to Model a BPEL Process. Dr. Stephen A. White, IBM Corp. US
• ASAP/Wf-XML 2.0 Cookbook -- Updated. Keith D. Swenson, Fujitsu Software Corp. US

Section 3 -- Directory and Appendices

• Author's Appendix
• Chapters of WfMC
• WfMC Membership Directory

I read several of the articles in this volume. Several were interesting and a few were outstanding. Stephen White's article on BPMN and BPEL is definitive and Mendling and Neumann's work on XML Interchange Formats for BPM is very useful. Swenson's update on Wv-XML is a must read for anyone interested in working with Wf-WML. Articles by Miers, Kearney, Lienhard and Kunzi, and Cardoso raise important issues in thoughtful ways. As in the past, there was more useful material in this volume that one usually gets in a book of readings of this kind.

At $95, this isn't a book most individuals would buy to get an introduction to the world of workflow. It's a handbook that documents the development of a field and considers the issues most important circa 1994-1995. And its a directory of the companies and individuals active in workflow. This is a book that professionals interested in monitoring the workflow market will buy for their corporate libraries. It's a reference for researchers, and it's a good one. The latest volume is a nice addition to the series.