

## EDITORIAL

### REVIEWING BOOKS

One of the ways universities are distinguished from other post-secondary institutions and in turn from private research institutes is the relationship that exists between teaching and research. The teaching role is an obvious and clearly understood function of the university. Research (defined in its broadest sense to include the full range of scholarly and professional thought) is necessary to the university so that new techniques and knowledge can be discovered and disseminated. Scholarly journals like this one allow the faculty member to air ideas for public consideration by peers. This exchanges of views gives the researcher much needed analysis and criticism, it acquaints the readership with the latest in ones own field of interest and it keeps the teacher aware of changes in a variety of disciplines and areas.

An important section of most scholarly journals is the Book Review Section. At a time when the 'knowledge explosion' appears to be overwhelming and making the faculty workload heavier, and when the price of published material is rising the inclusion of reviews of the latest publications gives the potential purchaser the luxury of deciding which among the latest publication will be of most benefit to research and to the classroom. Relying on the judgment of the reviewer — a colleague qualified to pronounce upon the volume — the individual is then able to make an informed decision on a particular text.

Many journals, including this one, offer two book services to their readers: review essays and book reviews. The purpose of the review essay is to summarize the analyze the current state of a discipline. It normally includes in it references to the newest research findings in the field, to the articles, monographs and books that have been published recently, and to any criticisms that have surfaced. It pulls together the current literature in the field and brings the reader up to date on the leading edge of research in a given discipline. These essays often make suggestions as to where the field is going and offer advice concerning possible new areas of research. Review essays in the JET are occasional pieces in which both the subject matter and the potential essayist are suggested by either the editor or the book review editor.

Books reviews, on the other hand, tend to concentrate on only one volume, are the largest part of the book service, and rely on the advertising techniques of publishers who send books for review purposes and on the good will of academics who are asked to write reviews. I thank heaven in the eyes of a book review editor would be publishers who automatically send appropriate books to the book editor, and reviewers who respond positively, on time, and within the guidelines established by reviews.

Education, besides being a field of study within the university, is also a profession that serves the public. It, therefore must appeal to two masters, must perform more than one function. Scholarly journals within education and their book review sections also have a double task. Besides reporting on the latest findings in theoretical research they also have an obligation to the field to promote the practical application of this research. Given this mandate and the large number of disciplines within the field of education book review sections tend to review books in a wide variety of areas, using various methodologies, and written by scholars, disciplinary specialists and classroom teachers. The objective of our book review section is to treat all of these matters while at the same time giving our audience thoughtful, critical, reasonable assessments of the latest publications.

Both this double mandate and the size of the field make it increasingly difficult for a journal like ours to perform its traditional functions. We have by necessity become very selective in the research we

include and the books we review. As the field expands at an ever increasing pace it is evident that some of the new tools of information technology offer the only long term solution to providing educators with the information and communication abilities necessary to remain at the forefront in their academic and/or professional field. Research into methods of electronic publishing is progressing here at the University of Calgary and elsewhere, and given advances in the related technologies and their declining costs, it seems reasonable to expect that the form and the media in which review materials will be made available will change over the next few years. New methods of access and new tools for abstracting and categorizing materials will emerge. However, the critical analysis and evaluation which characterizes good reviews in the traditional, 'hard core' journals must continue regardless of format and delivery. Until the millennia, then, book reviews will continue to be an important function of journals like this one.

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