

Criteria for the William James Book Award of the Society for General Psychology

The Award is intended to honor and publicize a recent book that best serves to further the goals of the Society by providing an outstanding example of an effort to bring together diverse subfields of psychology and related disciplines. This work must provide a coherent framework that stands as a creative synthesis of theory and fact from disparate areas and demonstrate an essential underlying set of themes that serve to unify or integrate the field.

In judging the merits of the work the following issues will be considered:

1. The degree to which the book conforms to the guidelines above and serves to further the goals of the Society.
2. The quality of the framework. It should be able to stand the test of rigorous logic on the one hand and psychological significance on the other. It should be rigorous: explicitly stated and empirically grounded.
3. The scope or comprehensiveness of the approach. The more areas of psychological fact, theory, and practice that are dealt with, the better.
4. The attractiveness or elegance of the framework as an intellectual effort. It should be a fascinating approach to a difficult problem.
5. The literary quality of the work. It should be interestingly and well written and stand as a model of how psychology can be presented to a general audience.
6. The pragmatic quality of the work. Does it provide us as psychologists a means of accomplishing something worthwhile? Is there evidence for this?
7. The degree to which it is consistent and consonant with other areas of psychology as well as areas of science more broadly considered, particularly, closely related areas of social and biological science.
8. The degree to which it makes contact with and is consistent with philosophical and empirical issues that define psychology as a discipline.
9. The degree to which the book is consistent with the high quality of previous WJBA winners and thus would make the Society proud of the judgment.
10. The degree to which the book has the potential for having a significant impact within or beyond psychology.

The history of the judging process has made clear that certain kinds of approaches do not generally satisfy the criteria sufficiently to be competitive. These approaches are discouraged and include text books, analytic reviews, biographies, illustrations of psychology's application to social issues, and edited books. Entries in one of these categories should be accompanied by a statement that makes a sufficiently distinctive and compelling case for the innovative and integrative character of the work to overcome whatever initial bias may exist against the genre. Contributors of edited volumes should understand that the creativity and direction provided by editors is of prime importance and must be made obvious in the statement.