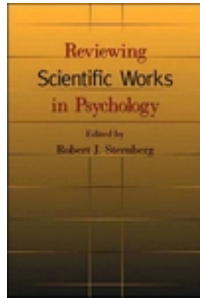




Reflecting on Reviewing

A review of



Reviewing Scientific Works in Psychology

by Robert J. Sternberg (Ed.)

Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006. 131 pp. ISBN 1-59147-281-4.
\$34.95

Reviewed by

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☞ The reviewing of journal articles, theoretical analyses, literature reviews, grant proposals, books, and book chapters is an essential part of quality control and advancement of science. In this short collection, Sternberg has brought together leading scholars to address issues and techniques of reviewing. *Reviewing Scientific Works in Psychology* is unique in its focus on reviewing a wide variety of materials.

☞ The book's layout and content are coherent and lucid. The first chapter, by Tesser and Martin, pertaining to reviewing empirical submissions to journals, is an inclusive overview, a tour de force, of the review process and provides key strategies that facilitate exceptional reviews. It includes advice such as to be careful not to interject one's own ego into the process of evaluating others' ideas. As discussed by Tesser and Martin, an imperative of reviewing that is thoughtful and appropriate is for one not to engage in overkill when recommending rejection of a paper. Tesser and Martin emphasize the value of encouraging authors in the further refinement of their work, even if the present paper does not meet the threshold for publication. A former editor of a major journal in psychology once noted that her long-term policy was to decline a paper without ever saying it was "rejected." In a world filled with rejection, such a posture seems wonderfully humane.

☞ The following six chapters focus on reviewing specific types of scientific works. Sternberg and Grigorenko address reviewing articles for methods. Sternberg analyzes the issues in reviewing theoretical articles. Eagly focuses on refereeing literature review submissions to journals. VandenBos, Frank-McNeil, and Amsel present issues associated with reviewing book proposals. Roediger treats the topic of reviewing book chapters. The final chapter, by Gade, Costanze, and Kaplan, addresses reviewing grant and contract proposals.

☞ These last four chapters contain discussion of work that is seldom found in the formal literature of psychology. For example, one learns from Roediger that it is rare indeed for invited chapters for edited books to be rejected. Rather, the reviewer and editor try to help the author shape the product over different revisions to the point of acceptability. VandenBos (who is executive director of publications for the American Psychological Association) and colleagues discuss the business side of publishing. Books must make money for the publisher. Thus, the marketability of the work becomes a central question, just as the scholarly merit of the work needs to be evaluated.

☞ Each chapter provides fundamental information, such as the duties and expectations of reviewers, reviewing procedures, critical questions to filter the content of submissions, common mistakes made by submitters and reviewers, analysis of potentially destructive or

counterproductive practices, and relevant theory surrounding validity. One addition to the book that might have made it even more useful would have been literal examples of well done, or poorly done, reviews of different types of work. The chapters are sufficiently clear that the reader who is an experienced reviewer can readily imagine how reviews would or would not be well done given the principles being discussed. However, readers who are less experienced in review work might benefit from such illustrations.

☞ Although the focus of *Reviewing Scientific Works in Psychology* is on psychology, its advice and distinctions can be readily generalized to the other social sciences. The book could be readily used in advanced undergraduate and graduate seminars on methods and introductions to the scientific enterprise in psychology. Further, it is accessible and thorough enough that experienced and beginning reviewers alike will find it valuable.

☞ Sternberg and colleagues deserve our appreciation for making the processes of evaluation of scholarly work more transparent and open to challenge, insofar as these processes are all too often veiled in secrecy.

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