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## Book Reviews

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Karla A. Henderson with M. Deborah Bialeschki. 1995. *Evaluating Leisure Services: Making Enlightened Decisions*. State College, PA: Venture. ISBN: 0-910251-72-X, \$29.95, hardback, 349 pages.

Research and evaluation can be intimidating and daunting subjects. Students are often fearful of the subjects, practitioners tend to avoid the whole matter, and at times academicians gloss over both the theories and the practice of research and evaluation. With a self-described *USA Today* approach to writing an evaluation textbook, Karla A. Henderson with M. Deborah Bialeschki present an often difficult to digest topic in a user-friendly, sound-bite fashion. The material is divided into "chapter-ettes" which allow a reader to consider small pieces of information in a relatively anxiety-free manner. The authors divide the text into four units: Introduction to Foundations for Evaluation; Evidence—Data Collection; Evidence—Data Analysis; and Judgment—Data Reporting. This four dimension layout includes equal treatment of qualitative and quantitative approaches and techniques to evaluation. References, a thorough glossary, and a table of random numbers are found in the appendices.

The general intent of the book is to provide an understanding of the need for evaluation research in the delivery of leisure services. Henderson and Bialeschki attempt to provide a basic overview and working knowledge of evaluation procedures, and to show the links that exist between programming and evaluation, and management and evaluation. The text is targeted to senior level undergraduates, beginning graduate students, and practitioners.

This book is long overdue in that texts in leisure services that deal with similar and related subject matter are both out of date and out of print. The authors offer a comprehensive picture of evaluation; traditional evaluation models are presented, as is a section that is usually only found in research texts (experimental design). The inclusion of this material exposes students to a few common research designs as well as evaluation methodologies.

The authors do a commendable job of meeting the stated goals of the text. Unit One provides information that serves to instill an awareness and understanding of the need for evaluation research in the delivery of leisure services. The use of varied examples from diverse settings within the field help all students of leisure services to understand the importance and place of evaluation. The text is thorough; evaluation is presented in such a way that a reader could develop an adequate evaluation process from reading and reflecting upon the material.

Within academia this text will be very useful as it is understandable and holds the reader's attention. In addition, the text has potential for use by professionals in the field. The sound-bite approach to presenting constructs might be attractive to busy practitioners who are limited in both time and energy.

There are many strong points of this text in relation to evaluation in leisure services. The authors obviously value both qualitative and quantitative methods in evaluation, and this is evident throughout the text. The text takes a pragmatic approach; in fact, one of the chapters addresses “perfect” vs. “good-enough” methods of evaluation. This question or issue (perfect vs good enough) is one that is commonly faced in the field, and while some might argue with scientific concerns, many times good enough is the only practical choice.

Another example of real-world applicability is in the final unit which provides information about how to organize and conduct oral presentations, write technical reports, and the use of tables and figures. This unit should prove useful to many different types of readers in their efforts to disseminate results of various evaluations and similar efforts.

The sampling section also is well handled—it is easy to read, follow and implement. Underlying issues and concerns related to the importance of sampling are understandable to the reader, resulting in potentially more accurate evaluation processes. An element of the text that makes it particularly attractive to undergraduate students is the extensive glossary found in the appendix. In a content area heavy with jargon, an easy-to-use and thorough glossary is helpful.

Overall this reviewer was pleased to finally see a text that addresses many weaknesses of similar texts in the field; however, there were a few drawbacks. At the end of each chapter is a section entitled “From Ideas to Reality.” The title of this section would lead one to believe that specific guidance related to real-world issues will be provided, but the section is simply a short and sometimes weak chapter summary. Therefore, while an end of chapter link to professional practice is an attractive idea, the material and presentation of information does not meet its potential.

Both a strength and a weakness of this text were the many figures added for increased understanding. Each chapter is well supplied with such supplemental illustrations, and many of the figures have been adapted from other books in the subject area. In some cases it appears as though the adaptation of materials is incomplete; often the terms and phrases found in the figures were beyond the understanding of undergraduate, first time readers. In practice, this reviewer found that students initially ignored the supplemental material because they were unable to comprehend it on their own. If the glossary included the unfamiliar terms found in the figures, this particular weakness would be mitigated.

Another element of the text which may be viewed as both a strength and a limitation is the focus on evaluation as the premise for inquiry; the broader construct of research is relegated to the back burner. While students appreciated the evaluation approach, it was difficult for this reviewer to accept experimental research designs as “usable” evaluation methods. Viewing research methods presented as evaluation techniques made it a bit difficult to link the material with non-evaluation research. It is the opinion of this reviewer that pre-professionals and practitioners need to be exposed to and taught the value of research for the sake of gathering new knowledge in

addition to the values of research in evaluation. Perhaps this is a task for a different text.

Henderson and Bialeschki provide excellent coverage of descriptive statistics as used in organizing and presenting data. In addition, an introduction to inferential statistics is also provided. While the treatment of inferential statistics was accurate, it was clearly secondary to the primary use of this text and requires some previous understanding of statistics to be completely useful. Inferential statistics are not commonly used by practitioners and this section might serve to confuse people new to evaluation and research.

There is a clear need for a text which addresses research and evaluation in a simple, non-threatening fashion and the authors have provided such a book. The short chapters and the manner in which material is presented (succinct yet comprehensive) could very well serve to increase the number of professionals involved in the applied process of research and evaluation. The validation and explanation of multiple approaches (qualitative/quantitative) to evaluation provides enough introductory information to allow one to feel some level of comfort in beginning either type of evaluation. The authors have put together a fine resource for both students and practitioners in the field of leisure services.

DEBRA J. JORDAN, Re.D. University of Northern Iowa

Douglas M. Knudson, Ted T. Cable & Larry Beck. (1995). *Interpretation of Cultural and Natural Resources*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing, Inc. ISBN 0-910251-703 \$35.95 hardcover, 509 pages.

Occasionally a book, designed as a text, provides such a wealth of information that it crosses boundaries to become an invaluable resource outside of the academic community. *Interpretation of cultural and natural resources* is such a book. In his foreword, former Director of the National Park Service, James Ridenour focused on the potential audience as students, practicing interpreters and administrators. He concluded rightly, "Reading this book is a wise investment of time."

The authors, Douglas Knudson, Ted Cable and Larry Beck assert that "this book concerns the principles, philosophies, and practices that are the essence of the rapidly growing profession of interpretation." Relatively few choices of appropriate and contemporary texts for preparation in interpretive services have been available. *Interpretation of cultural and natural resources* fills the gap left by the dated work of Grant Sharpe, *Interpreting the environment*, and exceeds the practical focus of the *Interpreter's handbook series* (University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point). Knudson et al. have built upon the foundation of John Muir, Enos Mills, Freeman Tilden, and Barry Lopez, and connected to the work of Van Matre, Dustin, McAvoy, Kohlberg, Maslow, Ford, Ham and many more.