

Summer 2015

Book reviewing as a scholarly contribution

Linda Hite

Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne, hitel@ipfw.edu

This research is a product of the [Organizational Leadership](#) faculty at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne.

Follow this and additional works at: http://opus.ipfw.edu/ols_facpubs

 Part of the [Industrial and Organizational Psychology Commons](#), and the [Organizational Behavior and Theory Commons](#)

Opus Citation

Linda Hite (2015). Book reviewing as a scholarly contribution. *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*.27 (3), 1-2. Wiley.

http://opus.ipfw.edu/ols_facpubs/98

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Division of Organizational Leadership and Supervision at Opus: Research & Creativity at IPFW. It has been accepted for inclusion in Organizational Leadership and Supervision Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Opus: Research & Creativity at IPFW. For more information, please contact admin@lib.ipfw.edu.

Editorial— Book Reviewing as a Scholarly Contribution

New Horizons in Adult Education
& Human Resource Development
27(3), 1-2

Linda M. Hite¹

Book reviews may be the unsung heroes of academic publishing. A unique and rarely discussed writing genre in adult learning or HRD, they provide a way to navigate the morass of publication announcements that flood our e-mail with intriguing possibilities that we would be happy to read if we only had the time. Conversely, they may open our eyes to titles we might have ignored if not for a thoughtful and informative critique that drew our attention and piqued our curiosity.

On the surface, book reviews may appear deceptively simple. They do not require development of an empirical study or a new theory; and they are, by design, shorter than most articles. However, they require a depth of knowledge that may not be initially apparent. Part of the criteria of a strong review is sufficient grounding in the theoretical constructs of the topic (Hatcher & McDonald, 2011). This requires not only an understanding of what this work contributes to the field but also how this new addition complements that author's previous research (Weissman, 2010). Research on excellent reviews indicate they also include clear identification of the strengths and weaknesses, thoughtful conclusions, and a new perspective into the book (Hartley, 2005, 2006). So, writing an insightful review takes time, knowledge, and a skillful touch to be "critical but civil" (East, 2011; Tobin, 2003, p. 50). Yet, in the grand scheme of publications and promotion, book reviews clearly lack the status of peer-reviewed articles. Interestingly, some disciplines have begun to question if book reviews should be reconsidered as key "scholarly output" and rewarded accordingly (East, 2011, p. 53).

So, who offers to read that raft of new books and render reviews that help us determine which volumes to pursue and which to pass by, and what prompts them to accept that challenge? Reviewers represent a span of experience levels, from graduate students eager to explore another genre of academic publishing to seasoned scholars seeking to expand their own knowledge or to disseminate interesting ideas (East, 2011; Hartley, 2005). A small study of international reviewers suggested rationale for writing a review was more likely to be based upon interest in the book, or wanting to share something of value with colleagues than upon thinking it would be useful for career advancement (Hartley, 2005). Book reviews then are a contribution of service as well as scholarship, letting us all participate in the journey of discovery.

Hartley (2006) determined disciplines vary in how useful scholars find book reviews, and how regularly they read them. In light of that observation, I encourage you to take time to read the reviews in this issue and to explore those in past and upcoming volumes. They provide a wonderful glimpse into the range of topics that enrich the fields of adult learning and human resource development. If you are inspired to write a review yourself, check the Author Guidelines (Book and Media Review section) on this site for specific criteria for New Horizons, and contact me if you have a particular book in mind, or if you would like a review assignment. "Book reviews play an important part in academic communication" (Hartley, 2006, p. 1194). Be part of the conversation.

¹Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne

Corresponding Author:

Linda M. Hite, Organizational Leadership & Supervision, Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne,
Fort Wayne, Indiana
Email: hitel@ipfw.edu

Reference

- East, J. W., (2011). The scholarly book review in the humanities: An academic Cinderella? *Journal of Scholarly Publishing, 43*(1), 52-67.
- Hartley, J., (2005). Book reviewing in the BJET: A survey of BJET's referees' and writers' views. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 36*(5), 897-905.
- Hartley, J. (2006). Reading and writing book reviews across the disciplines. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, 57*(9), 1194-1207.
- Hatcher, T., & McDonald, K. S., (2011). Creating and publishing nonrefereed manuscripts: How to write editorials and book reviews. In T. S. Rocco, T. Hatcher, & Associates (Eds.), *The handbook of scholarly writing and publishing* (pp. 222-235). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Tobin, R. W., (2003). The commensality of book reviewing. *Journal of Scholarly Publishing, 35*(1), 47-51
- Weissman, D. (2010). Some thoughts about the requirements for reviewing books. *Metaphilosophy, 41*(5), 715-716.