

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

MARGOT NORTHEY, LORNE TEPPERMAN and JAMES RUSSELL, *Making Sense: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing*, 2nd edition. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press. 2002, viii + 184 p., Index, \$19.95 paper.

This guide provides a concise and accessible outline of various approaches, techniques, and processes for undergraduate students in the social sciences of anthropology, Canadian studies, history, political science, sociology, and women's studies. The authors have attempted to lay out in clear and non-technical language, using pertinent and a varied examples, the basics of theory and method, as well as the steps a student needs to follow to design, theorize, use data, argue, and write in various academic formats. The book also includes common grammatical and language-use problems, glossaries, and advice on documentation and ethics, as well as some very helpful lists such as the word substitution list on page 136 that stresses the use of plain language, and the "Linking Word(s)" list on page 141.

The book describes both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms and takes a refreshing approach by encouraging students to combine techniques. It describes qualitative measurement as the best means of understanding human subjects, and answering "how" questions, while it sees quantitative methods as more useful in answering "what" in research questions. Despite the qualitative leaning of *Making Sense*, there is due homage paid to quantitative methods and a reasoned argument for the combination of both approaches to research. There is passing reference to the divisions within the social sciences over the relative merits of both the qualitative and quantitative approaches. As such, this student guide may well promote the healing of rifts within the social sciences in the next generation of scholars.

The handbook is not intended to provide a resource extensive enough to replace detailed reference books on grammar or proper formatting and documentation whether in MLA, APA or University of Chicago styles. One weakness of the book is that it does not emphasise the distinctiveness of each style, nor how much weight is put on proper reference formatting. Instead, the guide simply directs students to their professors, admonishes them to be consistent, and offers SSS, APA and MLA examples. A suggestion that students should consult their university libraries, where they could find recent editions of reference texts, would be helpful. Library programmes have suffered in the secondary-school level due to funding cutbacks in recent years, and many students are arriving at university

without a basic understanding of research techniques and resources. They would benefit from a guide, like this one, pointing them towards the more extensive resources of their university campuses, and the helpfulness of university librarians. In addition to the bibliography, perhaps the authors could consider adding a list of "further readings" that would include key print and on-line publications in the social sciences, such as the style guides mentioned above.

The layout of the book and the order of the chapters follows a logical sequence, and the chapter titles clearly describe the contents. Sub-headings in the table of contents help students locate pertinent advice more quickly. The index is not as extensive as it could be (for example, there is one reference to the Internet) and it can use more cross-references. The assumption may be that the reasonable size of the book and the bold headings and easy-to-read typeface will make it easy to locate information with a quick flip-through. It is questionable whether the quality of the type of soft cover construction chosen for this book will tolerate an extensive amount of handling. A single typographic error on page 98 could prove confusing for students in the closing comments of the Qualitative Data chapter. The opening sentence which reads "In this chapter, we have examined some of the methods used by quantitative [sic] researchers, and looked at how this kind of research differs from quantitative analysis" is unworthy as an error from Oxford Press.

Overall, *Making Sense: a Student's Guide to Research and Writing* is a reference tool that should prove beneficial and useful to students in the early years of their social science undergraduate degrees.

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