

## Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

ROBERT J. STERNBERG, *The Psychologist's Companion: A Guide to Scientific Writing for Students and Researchers*. 4th ed. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. 2003, vii + 301 p. Index.

Robert Sternberg is a well-known scholar in psychology and a prolific writer (with some 950 books, chapters, and articles to his name). He is the Director of the Center for the Psychology of Abilities, Competencies, and Expertise at Yale University, and is therefore well versed in the features that contribute to expertise. Here (and in other publications), he directs that expertise toward scholarly writing. *The Psychologist's Companion* was originally published in 1977 (under the title, *Writing the Psychology Paper*), subsequently republished in 1988 and 1993, and now appears in its fourth edition. Across 16 chapters, Sternberg provides a range of tips and examples to support new scholars to write and publish in psychology. He addresses both substantive and stylistic concerns across a range of writing genres (empirical research studies, library research papers, book proposals, grant and contract proposals, lectures). He presents clear, concise prose and frequent numbered lists to convey his messages for students and (mostly beginning) researchers. But why would scholars in sociology or anthropology care? What value is a psychologist's companion to the readers of the *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*?

Scholars in sociology and anthropology write empirical research studies, library research papers, book proposals, grant and contract proposals, and lectures. Sternberg explains some of the tacit skills and techniques involved in these various writing tasks. He provides strategies for taking notes as you read articles. He articulates the importance of having something to say and developing an argument as you write. He presents techniques for anticipating and addressing potential referees' concerns. He clarifies commonly misused terms (61 that are non-technical and relevant across disciplines; 70 that are technical, only some of which are relevant in sociology or anthropology). He illustrates successful ways to present tables, graphs, and other figures. He explains the manuscript submission process for journal articles and books. He describes how to handle rejection (even admitting to his own rejected manuscripts). Throughout, he provides plenty of examples to illustrate his various points. This is all valuable information for beginning sociologists and anthropologists.

However, the book is about writing in psychology, and provides inadequate coverage for writing in sociology or anthropology. Perhaps the book could provide incentive for a senior scholar in sociology or anthropology to take on the task of preparing a comparable book that more adequately addresses writing in sociology (or anthropology). Such an author might be found amongst the

members of the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association who support the Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology.

So what more would a Sociologist's (or Anthropologist's) Companion need to include? While experimental quantitative research approaches continue to hold sway in psychology (although not exclusively, see for example, Camic, et al., *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 2003), sociology and anthropology are more open to a broader range of research approaches. A Sociologist's (or Anthropologist's) Companion would need to include strategies for writing theoretical, qualitative, emancipatory, postmodern, and other kinds of research papers, not just library research papers and experimental research papers. A reconceptualized introductory chapter could provide an overview of writing genres that predominate in sociology and anthropology to set up a sequence of chapters on different types of papers, as well as comparable chapters about grant and contract proposals, book proposals, and lectures. The Sociologist's Companion could also include an annotated listing of journals in sociology to help scholars decide where to submit all those different kinds of papers. A chapter on American Sociology Association writing guidelines could be substituted for Sternberg's chapter on American Psychological Association writing guidelines. However, sociology journals are generally somewhat less standardized in terms of writing styles than psychology journals; no single style format predominates across sociology journals. This lack of standardization means that the Sociologist's Companion would need to address strategies for identifying the style guidelines for a specific journal. Perhaps, this discussion might also include suggestions regarding the use of word processing templates and bibliographic software (e.g., EndNote, ProCite) that can automatize some of the necessary style differences across journals. An Anthropologist's Companion would need comparable information for anthropology.

The new Sociologist's (or Anthropologist's) Companion could also address some of the niggling details that bothered me as I read Sternberg's book. The Social Science Citation Index is a useful source, but it is by no means a "virtually complete listing of all citations" (4). Sternberg's reliance upon gendered pronouns rather than gender-neutral writing was irksome, even though he sometimes used female pronouns in a generic fashion. His major hint for selecting a journal for manuscript submission is for aspiring scholars to ask their advisors or course instructors for advice, which is a somewhat dissatisfying tip. The Sociologist's Companion could identify some of the considerations that underlie such decisions and point scholars to important resources to gather data relevant to these decisions. It would also be nice if the Sociologist's Companion included some Canadian content. The Sociologist's (or Anthropologist's) Companion could also be extended to include standards for evaluating all papers, not just the fewer than ten per cent destined to become "classics" (a shortcoming of chapter 10). Finally, there was considerable overlap between the various chapters of the book that could benefit from some more careful editing. There was also overlap between this book and Sternberg's (2000) edited collection, *Guide to Publishing in Psychology Journals*, which led me to query whether Sternberg followed his own rule regarding not publishing the same information multiple times.

There is certainly value to the advice that readers will find within the Psychologist's Companion, but I look forward to reading the Sociologist's (or Anthropologist's) Companion.

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