

**Elements for Basic Reviews:
A Guide for Writers and Readers of Reviews of Works in All Mediums and Genres**

Developed April 2005 by the ALA/RUSA
CODES Materials Reviewing Committee

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1. INTRODUCTION

This is the first edition of a new on-line document developed by the RUSA CODES Materials Reviewing Committee in 2003/2004. Its primary purpose is to guide librarians who wish to become reviewers on the elements that make up a good review; in addition, it warns about elements to avoid. Its secondary purpose is to help library selectors recognize elements that define a good review. Finally, it may serve the needs of authors and publishers by demonstrating how reviews in professional library trade journals are written. For all three audiences, it offers an overview into the reviewing process.

Reviews serve multiple purposes for library selectors, publishers, authors, students, and scholars. Library selectors use reviews to make informed decisions concerning the potential usefulness of an item for their clientele, to compare like items, to choose one item over another (or to choose not to purchase an item), and to justify the purchase and defend the appropriateness of an item for a library collection. Reviews in some publications (such as *Library Journal*) are written for a library audience; the purpose of such reviews is not only to evaluate the quality of a specific item but also to assess how it may fit into an academic, public, school, or special library collection. Selectors may also use reviews for reader's advisory and for program planning (such as book or film clubs). Publishers and authors may use reviews to promote sales, to improve existing products, and to develop future products. Scholars and students may use reviews to track and evaluate publishing trends as well as related cultural and social changes.

Reviewers should be aware that each publication has its own guidelines, requirements, and audience for reviews. Editors of some publications request that potential contributors submit a sample review. It is unusual for reviewers to receive monetary compensation, but they are often permitted to keep materials they have reviewed.

2. COMMON ELEMENTS FOUND IN MOST REVIEWS:

The following elements are usually deemed critical for most reviews:

- 2.1. Bibliographic Information as requested by the editor.
 - 2.1.1. Title/Subtitle
 - 2.1.2. Author(s), Editor(s), Illustrator(s)
 - 2.1.3. Publisher
 - 2.1.4. Date of Publication
 - 2.1.5. Number of pages
 - 2.1.6. Auxiliary materials, e.g., index, bibliography
 - 2.1.7. ISBN or other unique ordering number
 - 2.1.8. Price
 - 2.1.9. Edition (where relevant)

2.4.4. Does the author serve the needs of the intended audience?

2.5. Comparison

2.5.1. The review should state how the material compares in both form and content with othe

- Both general and genre fiction may include special subgenres. Examples: Subgenres for Adventure include Exotic Adventure, Techno-thrillers and Political Adventure, 19th Century Military. Subgenres for Christian Fiction include Apocalyptic, Biblical, Contemporary, etc.
 - There are some types of fiction that may fit into two or more genres. A book could be fit into both the Christian Fiction and Historical Fiction categories.
- 3.1.2. Reviewers must have read widely in fiction generally or in the genre that they are reviewing; they must be aware of major current authors, themes, and trends.
- 3.1.3. The review should clearly and briefly summarize the plot and the characters without giving away plot twists or surprises.
- 3.1.4. The review should make clear the author's intent or the ideas conveyed.
- 3.1.5. The review should evaluate the cohesiveness of the plot, the appeal of the characters, and the effectiveness or value of the ideas conveyed.
- 3.1.6. The review should aim to capture the nature and quality of the writing style since this factor is extremely important in fiction.
- 3.1.7. The review should aim, where possible, to state where the work stands in the author's oeuvre.
- 3.1.8. The review should aim to clarify what makes this work a distinctive reading experience and give its comparative value within the range of fiction available to read.
- 3.1.9. For genre fiction:
- The item should be compared with other works by the author or, if a first novel, with other books in the genre.
 - If the item is part of a series, indicate series name and position in the series.
 - If book combines elements of genres, indicate the audience(s) that will probably be most interested in the title.
- 3.2. Adult Nonfiction
- 3.2.1. Definition: Adult level non-fiction reviews are usually focused on materials written for the layperson who is interested in the information for personal rather than academic or professional purposes.
- 3.2.2. Reviewer should have knowledge

covered is controversial, and should notify the editor if they feel that they cannot be objective.

- 3.2.5. Reviewers should determine whether the item accomplishes its stated purpose.
 - Does it use the facts fairly, or is it selective in its presentation?
 - Has the author built a convincing case to persuade us that his or her argument is correct? If so, why? If not, why not?
 - Is the item presented in a manner appropriate for its intended audience?
 - 3.2.6. Reviewers should indicate whether the information presented is current and accurate.
 - Any factual errors should be noted.
 - Does the work, and its bibliography, if any, demonstrate knowledge of current thinking, technology, etc. in the discipline?
 - 3.2.7. Reviewers should consider the credentials of the author and the reputation of the publisher.
 - Indicate is the author or publisher is well-known for expertise in the subject area.
 - Does the author/publisher maintain an acceptable standard in keeping with their reputation?
 - 3.2.8. Special features such as bibliographies, illustrations, photographs should be pointed out and evaluated where possible.
 - Indicate if the galley does not contain these materials.
- 3.3. Collections of Essays, Short Fiction, and Other Multi-authored Works
- 3.3.1. This type of material presents several additional challenges to the reviewer who should:
 - Note whether the essays are new or reprinted.
 - Carefully examine editorial comments to determine the collective theme of the volume.
 - Let the reader know whether the essays are intended to be read in sequential order or randomly.
 - Note whether the volume is the republication of a journal issues so that the library can determine whether it already owns the volume in serial format.
 - 3.3.2. The reviewer should consider the following points in making an evaluation:
 - Does the volume have unified content, or does it look like a serial issue published as a monograph?
 - Is quality consistent across the multiple parts?
 - Is it better to concentrate on the overall quality or focus on specific contributions?
 - How important is the editor for the quality of the publication?

- Is it important to cite individual contributions by subject or author? (For academic writings, citing the author is important for tenure and promotion decisions.)
- Is there any consistency in the number of references, the presence of a bibliography for individual articles or for the complete work, and the ability of the index to tie the volume's themes together?

3.4. Reference Books

- 3.4.1. Definition: A reference book is a handbook or compendium that contains facts, statistics, definitions, formulae, or other basic information and gives direction to researchers. It provides users with current information that will help them develop arguments, explanations, and/or expand their search for more specific or specialized resources.
- Reference materials may be single volume or multi-volume sets.
 - Types of reference books include dictionaries, encyclopedias, and handbooks.
- 3.4.2. The reviewer should have a good grasp of the subject matter covered in the work and be aware of, or investigate, other reference works in the field.
- 3.4.3. The review should contain a general description of the work, its purpose, scope, and publication history.
- If the work is a revision or new edition of an existing source, the reviewer should pay special attention to the portions that have been revised. Note any dated or obsolete material. Note if the book is a supplement to, rather than a replacement for, earlier editions.
 - If the revision corrects mistakes or answers appropriate negative criticism of an earlier edition, the reviewer should note this fact.
 - The reviewer should note the authority of the author, editor, and contributors and their credentials or the lack thereof. Indicate if individual entries are signed.
 - Do the contents of the work match the purpose and scope?
- 3.4.4. Explain the organization of the work: alphabetical, chronological, topical, etc.
- Note ease of use, cross-references, table of contents, and indices.
 - Note whether the references are accurate.
 - Note the currency of bibliographic citations.
 - If appropriate, note type and number of illustrations, entries, and any special features such as tables, text boxes, etc.
- 3.4.5. Consider the audience for which the reference is written. Is the sophistication of language and concepts appropriate for that audience?
- 3.4.6. It is critical to compare the work to others in the field.
- Note any new contributions or indicate if it substantially duplicates similar items.
 - If the work is unique to the field, be sure to verify this claim.

- scholarly editions of personal documents (correspondence, diaries, business ledgers, papers of persons and organizations, etc.) and of literary, philosophical, religious, and other primary texts; exhibition catalogs or catalogs raisonnées of the work of artists; editions of musical works
- monographs or collections of essays focused narrowly on a topic
- works for professionals and practitioners in applied fields
- multi-volume synoptic works (e.g., histories of nations or literatures)
- Sources: Academic books rely on archival, empirical, or clinical data and, in the case of the humanities, close reading of texts and engagement with or interpretation of a critical tradition of texts or other primary products of cultural production (art works, musical works, motion pictures, etc.)

3.5.5. Points to consider in reviewing

- Qualifications of author(s)
Mention the institutional affiliation, reputation, or professional credits of the author. The specialized knowledge that academic authors bring to bear in their publications is informed not only by personal intelligence and writing ability but also by the reputation of the institutions that employ them and publish their work. Not all good scholars work at Harvard or Yale; but institutional affiliation(s) are worth mentioning.
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expertise because of the knowledge the reviewer needs to evaluate the quality of the work done. Cite other editions and compare them to the work in hand.

- Evidence and documentation.

Note the quality of the scholarly evidence and apparatus by considering the sources of the evidence used and the contribution made by notes and bibliography. Note whether the research or interpretation takes into account other recent scholarship, whether the text cites other relevant work, whether it engages with counter-examples or counter-evidence.

- Revised editions.

Note the extent of revision to the text and scholarly apparatus from the previous edition. Be skeptical of dust-jacket cl

Mention errors of fact or editing only if they have a cumulative effect on the reading of the text or damage the credibility of the argument.

- Academic language

Call attention to the language in an academic book only if it serves the argument particularly well or ill. To accuse an academic book of being technical or “jargon-ridden” is a lot like saying human beings have one head. Every field has its technical language, and academic books are written to an audience who use that language. The quality of the work’s exposition is im

- Ability to compare and contrast books on similar topics or in the genre- particularly with recently published materials or “classics.”
 - § Are there books like this one?
 - § If so, how does this book compare to them?
 - § If not, how is it unique? How successfully does it break new ground?



- § Brief episodes, chapters, or intervals that help the reader keep track of plot and characters.
- § Illustrations are important but may be only on a few pages rather than on each page.
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application process), as well as th

- The reviewer must have the ability to compare and contrast books on similar topics or in the format including any genre--particularly with recently published materials or "classics."
 - If similar items exist, compare the item to them.
 - If the item is unique, explain how; evaluate how well it breaks new ground.
- 3.8.3. Authorship: while stand-alone graphic novels are often the work of a single creator or of a writer and an artist working together, comic book-based graphic novels may be the work of a studio or the talents of individuals who worked on specific details (such as penciling or lettering). Many or all of these contributors may be given credit on the title page. If the creators are too numerous to include, the writer(s) or scripter(s) and the penciler(s) should be listed as the two creators with the most influence over the entire title as they provide the text and the overall art style of the book respectively. Use the guidance provided by the naming order on the book's title page, verso, and/or sources.
- 3.8.4. Series: Graphic novels may be created by one author or, as with children's picture books, one author and one artist working as a team. These titles should be evaluated as stand alone works.
- Graphic novels are also frequently published as part of an ongoing series or feature fictitious characters developed within comic book publishing.
 - If the title is a volume in a series, it is important to note the series and the chronological placement of the title in the series.
 - If the title is related to, but not within, the progression of the official series group, note the connection to other titles (such as those featuring the same fictitious character) in the review.
 - Sometimes the format and storyline may change as the characters age. If a series originally written for children is now characterized by themes and depictions more appropriate for a teen audience, this

- Appeal to the intended audience.
 - Age appropriateness.
- 3.8.7. Translation Issues: graphic novels produced in other countries present a unique challenge to translators in the translation of

4. ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

4.1. General Considerations

4.1.1. Definition. Electronic databases, books, journals, or other publications in either Web-based or CD-ROM formats. Many review considerations that apply to the book, such as content and authority, also apply to electronic resources. However, specialized characteristics of electronic resources may need to be mentioned in reviews.

4.1.2. Format. Indicate the format being tested (CD-ROM, Web-based, or other).

- Indicate if the item is available in other formats.
- Indicate if the resource is available from other vendors or publishers or on other platforms.
 - What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of each version?
 - If testing multiple versions, describe the differences between versions including frequency of updates, availability, price, functionality, etc.

4.1.3. Functionality. Evaluation of how well the technology of the product or site works.

- Testing. Ideally, products should be tested on multiple computers with different connection speeds, computer memory, operating systems, or browsers.
- Indicate whether the actual product or a sample database is being tested.
- Indicate whether a full release or a beta version is being tested.
- Evaluate ease of navigation.
- Evaluate load times and speed of product.
- Indicate easy or advanced modes. Intuitive for the novice; more sophisticated features for the expert.
- Indicate the ability to print, save, or email data.
- If the resource includes multimedia elements (e.g., audio or video), are special equipment or helper applications needed?

4.1.4. Comparative Evaluation

- If it is based on current print product(s), how does the content of the electronic product reflect the print product; how does it differ?
- If other databases with similar content exist, how does this product compare to them in content?
- If prior reviews or earlier editions of the database have been known to have weaknesses in content, functionality, etc., indicate if these have been corrected.

4.1.5. Currency and Depth

- How often is the title updated?
- Is an electronic archive available; does the license include rights to the product in perpetuity?
- If so, how are the archives stored and where do the archives reside. (e.g., provided on CD-ROM, tape or other physical product)

maintained by owning institution or resides on a server maintained either by the producer, a vendor, or by the owning institution)? Are archives considered part of the subscription/purchase price?

4.1.6. Price

- Give a general idea of pricing structure.
 -

electronic book, compilation of primary sources). The following are criteria to keep in mind for these formats and genre.

4.1.1. CD-ROMs/DVDs

- Indicate minimal hardware and operating system requirements.
- Indicate if both Windows and Macintosh versions are available or if the CD-ROM is a hybrid.
- Does the CD-ROM com

- Indicate the time period covered.
- Indicate the number of titles indexed or available in full text.
- Describe the quality of the indexing terminology, subject headings, or controlled vocabulary.
- Describe the format of any full-text articles (e.g., HTML, PDF).
- Note any problems with page image quality.
- Indicate any

- Materials may be produced for a general or specialized audience. It is important to indicate the primary audience for the product.
 - Materials provide an alternative as well as a supplemental source of information, education, and recreation. Some library users may prefer using audio-visual over than print formats.
- 5.1.2. Special elements that may be included in the bibliographic description.
- Format type (VHS/DVD, compact disk/cassette/MP3, etc.)
 - Inclusion of other formats with the primary format: some products, primarily audio products (particularly music), now have additional formatting available that is meant to be viewed using DVD or cd-rom (computer) players. Editors may ask for such inclusions to be included in the bibliographic statement or within the review.
 - If print materials are integral to the use of the material, such inclusions are noted.
 - Pricing considerations: most pricing is based on personal or home use models. If materials is licensed for public performance rights (ppr) (often used in educational settings), this should be noted in the review. Usually there is a difference in price for ppr or educational use items.
 - If no ISBN is available, the catalog number or UPC code may be included in the bibliographic statement.
 - Number of items and format(s) comprising the complete product.
 - Time required to listen to or to view the entire product.
- 5.1.3. Reviewer must have access to equipment to listen to or to view materials.

5.2. DVD/ VHS

- 5.2.1. Definition. Films, documentaries, or information presented primarily for viewing on a television or projected screen device.
- Many materials in this format are originally produced for release in theaters, for television viewing (particularly on cable networks), or for educational purposes. Some materials are made specifically for release to the video viewing audience.
 - VHS format has been the standard for viewing since the 1980's. However, DVD is becoming the new standard. Formats are constantly evolving and a reviewer needs to make careful note of format compatibility and availability.
- 5.2.2. Production standards. Most videos are expected to meet an acceptable standard for viewing and listening. This standard generally is that of "acceptable for broadcast." Usually, minor production flaws are not mentioned in the review unless they are important for a "not recommended" judgment by the reviewer.
- If material has been significantly altered from its original production standards (color added to original black and white format; director's cut, etc.), the reviewer should include this information.

- It is important to point out if production is presented in letter box/wide screen (as presented in theaters) or if the item has been reformatted to fit a television screen. If the reformatting adversely affects production values, this needs to be mentioned.
 - Sound and graphics should be used appropriately to present information.
 - Camera work adds variety and is smooth.
 - Sound is clear without background noise.
 - Quality of narration (voice over, single or multiple voices, etc.) must be considered.
 - Variety and quality of visual images (talking heads, computer graphics, etc.).
 - Editing should follow narration and provide variety and interest.
- 5.2.3. Pricing is often based on copyright restrictions and intended use; materials produced for the educational market or with public performance rights may have a higher purchase price than those materials produced for single or home use. Reviewer should know how the editor wants this information presented (usually in the bibliographic information).
- Multiple formats available: if the item is available in both VHS and DVD, the editor may ask that this information (with or without pricing and order/ISBN numbers) be presented in bibliographic statement or within the review itself.
 - Number of items comprising the complete product: it is important to point to any printed or other audio-visual formats that must be retained in the video packaging for the item to accomplish its purpose. This may affect buying decisions by some libraries.
- 5.2.4. Other reviewing considerations:
- Supplementary information: it is common for DVD to contain supplementary information not available in the VHS format. If this material significantly adds value to the item, this supplementary material should be mentioned in the review.
 - Dated material: some videos are re-released after their original production date. For materials for which dating may be a concern (non-fiction materials particularly), comparison of packaging dates and the copyright date on the film may be essential.
 - Some journals will not review materials not produced within the current year unless significant revision has been made to the product.
 - Older VHS materials now being released on DVD may not be reviewed unless there are significant production changes or supplementary materials included.
 - Audience: it is important to review the item from the standpoint of the audience it is intended to serve. Editor may ask that the “type of library” that should consider purchase be part of the review.

- Reviewer should indicate if an item is based on a published printed work. If it significantly affects the judgment for purchase made by reviewer, a comparison between the printed item and video may be made.
- 5.2.5. The usual standards for reviewing printed materials apply to reviewing of non-fiction/documentary products.
- Information should be accurate and timely.
 - Source for information given should be mentioned. Credits may include sources for information given. Credentials of the presenter or scriptwriters may be a consideration in determining accuracy of information.
 - Comparisons with classic or currently released products should be made.
- 5.2.6. Fiction/feature Film/Television Film Presentation
- Brief discussion of the plot.
 - Comparison with other, similar works either in the market, by the director/producer, or by the actor.
 - Although the item may have been reviewed professionally at the time of release; time may have passed since then. Review should reflect current audience interest and sensibilities.
 - If the item has obtained a “cult status” it is important to mention this audience.
 - If the item has proven to be a catalyst for change in the medium, this should be mentioned.
 - Quality of the acting.
 - Quality of the script.
 - If it represents an historical period, how well does it accurately represent that period?
 - If it is based on a published work or earlier film, how well does it adhere to the plot and characterizations in the original work?
 - If part of a series, how does it relate to the rest of the series?
- 5.2.7. Animated films
- Type and quality of animation.
 - Appropriateness of animation for presenting story/information.
 - Appropriateness for intended audience.
- 5.3 Spoken Word
- 5.3.1 Definition: materials that present information or story using primarily the voice on compact disk, tape, or other medium.
- Major Formats at the present time are cassette tape, compact disc, and MP3.
 - If non-spoken word materials are part of the original packaging, indicate if spoken materials can be used independently or need supplemental materials to present the information/story.
- 5.3.2. All Spoken Word
- Based on Printed Literature

- Is the program abridged, unabridged, or adapted from the original item?
- If not based on printed item, is the item an original lecture, play, etc.?
- Single narrator (reader) or more
 - Appropriate use of narrator/reader(s) voice to present materials (e.g. accents are appropriate, etc.).
 - If a narrator(s) is used to represent multiple characters, how well does narrator(s) reflect the different personalities?
- Indicate if special effects, music, etc. are used on the soundtrack, and indicate appropriateness for the type of item.
- If the editing or sound is substandard, it is critical to mention this and not to recommend the item.
- Indicate audience appeal and appropriateness.
- Provide a comparison with other productions of the same work or similar items.

5.3.3. Non-fiction

- Authority of author or producer to present the information.
 - This may be presented in the packaging or liner notes.
 - How well does it compare with similar items recently released?

5.3.4. Fiction

- It is critical to indicate the quality of the narration/reading and the ability of the narrator(s) to appropriately reflect divergent accents and gender voices. The reviewer may need to compare to previously or simultaneously recorded productions.
- If the item is part of a series, is the same narrator used for all items in the series. If not, how does the current narrator compare?

5.4. Musical Recordings

5.4.1. Discographic information

List the following according to the type of material being reviewed. Not all categories will apply to all recordings.

5.4.2. Composer(s)

- If the work is by one composer or a compilation by one composer, state the individual's name. If more than 2 or 3 composers' works are represented, give the first ones and state [et al].
- In many other genres, the performer's name will take precedence over the composer. This is especially important for classical music, opera, Broadway musicals, and other large-scale works.

5.4.3. Editor/arranger/producer, if any

Generally this can be included in the text, but occasionally someone who served one or more of these functions should be mentioned in the discographic entry to immediately distinguish one version from another.

5.4.4. Title(s)

Give the main title; if only 2 or 3 works are included, list all. If a larger compilation, give the general album title here rather than listing all works.

5.4.5. Performer(s)

- Mention main participants in brief, give more details in text:
 - Conductor
 - Orchestra
 - Soloist(s)
- Specific genres:
 - Opera, musical, theatrical works: main singers, conductor, orchestra.
 - Oratorio, mass, cantata, other non-staged work: main singers, chorus, conductor, orchestra.
 - Solo with orchestra or ensemble: soloist(s), conductor, ensemble.
 - Chamber music: all performers or established ensemble (such as a specific string quartet).
 - Jazz: soloists, ensemble.
 - Popular: “star”, ensemble
 - § Although there are many genres of “popular music” (e.g. country, rock, rap, oldies, folk), the discographic details required are usually very similar: name the main performer(s) and any accompanying ensemble in brief, spell out in more detail in text if necessary.
 - Ethnomusicological: generally, these will be music from regions other than the U.S. and Western Europe; list name(s) of performers or ensemble; if none listed on recording or if the country/region is not readily discernible, give region from which performance originated and explain in detail in text.

5.4.6. Label and publisher’s number or other order number

5.4.7. Date of release. If a re-release, give original date if readily available.

5.4.8. Format: Specify type of object:

- Compact disc
- Vinyl record (give size and speed if not 12”, 33 1/3 rpm)
- Cassette tape (give recording speed)
- DVD
- Reel-to-reel (give size and recording speed)
- Other as applicable

5.4.9. Specify recording technique if stated on item:

- Stereo
- Monaural
- Analog
- Digital
- Other as applicable

5.4.10. Review

- Information on the music

- Brief background on composer, librettist, lyricist, editor, arranger, producer, or any other individual closely connected with the recording.
- If appropriate, include historical notes such as influences on the composer, relationship to other music of its time and place, social or other events influencing the music, style of composition, etc.
- If several works are included, list or mention the titles (with composers if more than one) in the discussion.
- If the source or edition is critical to the recording, mention how it affects the performance 0 5.o

- recording; the review can help pinpoint the various features that might make a difference in which one(s) the reader purchases.
- Mention the recording history of the work if readily known. If dealing with the first recording, the only currently available recording, or a rarely-recorded work or group, indicate the unique quality of the item. If a recording is from another country or region, mention if it is “authentic,” blended with contemporary (e.g. Afro-pop), the work of an endangered community, or other information unique to the specific recording.
 - Take a stand, but explain why a choice is being made. All listening is subjective but comments regarding intonation, tone quality, performance venue, etc., allow readers to decide how important those specific criteria are to their listening experience.
 - Audience
Most musical works do not need a statement of audience, but occasionally it is helpful to state if the perceived audience will be extremely narrow, if the work is aimed at one group without that audience being obvious by the title or contents, or if the work is likely to prove offensive to some listeners. Examples might include music intended for a soloist to perform with recorded accompaniment, music intended for children, texts that are extremely explicit or violent.
 - Price/value.
Normally, this need not be mentioned. However, for example, if a recording is full-price but short on recorded time, the reader should be alerted to the inequality.
 - Any other distinguishing features.
Mention anything not covered above that would assist a reader in determining whether or not a recording will be of interest.

5.5. Scores

5.5.1 Bibliographic information: List th

Generally this can be included in the text, but an individual serving one of these functions may need to be mentioned in the bibliographic entry to distinguish one edition from another.

- Title(s)
Give the main title; if only 2 or 3 works are included, list all. If a larger collection, give the general title here rather than listing all the works.
- Series (if any)
- Publisher and date
- ISMN, publisher and/or plate number, or other identification
- Price
- Format:
 - Score
 - š ~~€~~ score (instruments, voices lined up vertically, usually

- Details of composer, composition, editor, background of composition, or its time and place if important to understand work. Include mention of arranger, lyricist, librettist, translator, or other individual with intellectual responsibility for some aspect of the printed material.
- If several works and/or composers are included, mention in review.
- Details on presentation, especially outstanding features or poor characteristics--clarity of nota

6. FINALIZING THE REVIEW

- 6.1. Adhere to deadlines; warn the editor as soon as you can if you will not be able to supply a review by the indicated deadline.
- 6.2. Polish the final review before submitting it to the editor:
 - Use the active voice; avoid the passive voice.
 - Avoid using language that may come across as cute, condescending, or obscure.
 - Watch basic grammar (keep an eye on prepositions) and spelling.
 - Get rid of nearly every it/this/that/there/who/which.
 - Remove redundancies and unnecessary descriptors.
 - Break up long sentences.
 - When possible, avoid negatives and state comments positively.
- 6.3. Beware of too much description and not enough evaluation. Don't present a laundry list or table of contents when describing an item.
- 6.4. Be sure to backup judgments and evaluations; offer support for evaluations.
- 6.5. The final recommendation for purchase should follow the text; don't give an item a negative review and then recommend it for purchase.
- 6.6. Reviewer should not be showcased; don't write about you and your reactions. Write about the material.
- 6.7. Avoid subjectivity and be as objective as possible. If you can't be objective, ask the editor to assign the materials to someone else.
- 6.8. Be very sure of your ground and avoid making false claims or criticisms for an item. For instance: "This is the ONLY book available on the subject," etc.

APPENDIX I.

Major Genres

- **Adventure:** Adventure novels typically have fast-moving plots, exotic settings, and larger-than-life heroes. The hero (usually a man) is involved in death-defying activities: gun battles, car chases, sneak attacks, etc.
- **Christian Fiction:** Christian fiction is characterized by explicit or implicit Christianity and little or no sex, violence, or profanity. These elements may be present but are often portrayed as unrewarded “sinful” behavior. Often written in a series to show the growth of faith over time, these books pose religious questions and answers, show conflict over faith and morality, often emphasize a conversion or crisis of faith, and exemplify Christian faith in real life.
- **Fantasy** is defined as speculative fiction based on magic or myth. The plots usually emphasize journeys whether psychological or physical and stress the importance of human virtues through individual acts of courage, sacrifice, and kindness. Complex and internally consist

characters are portrayed as strong and independent, and the ultimate fulfillment of their relationship is the focus. Settings may be historical, contemporary, or futuristic. Relationships may be portrayed gently, sensually, or even erotically.

- Science fiction is defined as speculative fiction based on plciATj0.0711 Tc -0.57011 Tw 12 0 0 1420

Appendix II

Example of a Bad and Good Review

Example of a Bad Review

Encyclopedia of the Scientific Revolution: From Copernicus to Newton. Ed. by Wilbur Applebaum. 2000. 758p. bibliogs. illus. index, Garland, \$150 (0-8153-1503-1). 509.4.

Eight years ago, when I took a history of science class, I learned there that there was debate over whether the phrase "scientific revolution" was problematical terminology, this reference book which will help readers that need to clarify this concept. The subtitle tells the reader that the time period covered by this encyclopedia is from the life of Copernicus to the life of Newton. It includes an index. Entries are signed. There are pictures every now and then. Bibliographies are included, some that are from the time period of the 1990's, and the entries are thought to be scholarly in nature. The changes in "natural philosophy" are chronicled by Applebaum in this new reference book which covers the beginning of the sixteenth century to the end of the seventeenth century, and that includes the political, religious, social, and technological factors bearing on developments in science. There is a concensus of opinion that this title has no other titles for comparison. Despite its flwas, this source is highly recommended for all libraries.

1. "Eight years ago, when I took a history of science class, I learned there that there was debate over whether the phrase "scientific revolution" was problematical terminology, this reference book which will help readers that need to clarify this concept."

- Run on sentence.
- Wordy: explanation already in subtitle; extra "this" and "that's."
- Reviewer's 0d752.217.0009 T4 T /P k24

- The usual: run on; passive, wordy, etc.
- We know it is “new” and a reference book (date of publication and the type of material indicates this).
- Sounds like a quote from the advertisements for from the preface; how does the reviewer describe the content.

basis for modern science. Recommended for larger public and academic science reference collections.

The Booklist; Chicago; Dec 1, 2000; Volume: 97 Issue: 7 Start Page: 750 ISSN: 00067385

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APPENDIX III

A. How to Write Reviews for Books and Electronic Resources: A Bibliography

This bibliography lists articles, book chapters, and books published from 1986 to 2004 that provide guidance and advice on how to write a review of a book or an electronic resource. How to review books is the primary emphasis.

Ashley, Leonard R. N. (Spring, 2002). The ethics of academic book reviewing. *Journal of Information Ethics*. 11(1), 37-51.

Collins, Boyd R. (February 15, 1996). Beyond cruising: Reviewing. *Library Journal*. 121(3), 122-124.

Cortada, James W. (October, 1998). Five ways to be a terrible book reviewer. *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*.

- ____. (January, 1999). Reviewing electronic media. *Library Journal*. 124(1), 73.
- ____. (June 15, 2001). Tainted reviews. *Library Journal*. 126(11), 61.
- ____. (October 15, 1993). There's no excuse for plagiarism. *Library Journal*. 118(17), 56.
- ____. (January, 1994). Too many positive reviews? *Library Journal*. 119(1), 90.
- ____. (July, 2001). What's a review, anyway? *Library Journal*. 126(12) 72.
- ____. (April 15, 1992). What's in a signoff? *Library Journal*. 117(7), 83.
- ____. (August, 1994). Whose words are they, anyhow? *Library Journal*. 119(3), 62.
- Fisher, Susan. (Spring, 2004). So many books. *Canadian Literature*. Issue 180, 6-9.
- Ford, Danielle J. (May/June, 2002). More than the facts: Reviewing science books. *The Horn Book*. 78(3), 265-271.
- Forrest, Katherine V. (March/April, 1995). Reviewing the reviewers. *Lambda Book Report*. 4(9), 11-12.
- Galef, David. (Spring, 2002). What ethics? Whose review? *Journal of Information Ethics*. 11(1), 19-21.
- Gannon, Mary. (September/October, 2003). Critics on reviews. *Poets & Writers*. 31(5), 54-61.
- Gerhardt, Lillian N. (November, 1990). Reviewing nonfiction: Tips on "how to review books you know nothing about." *School Library Journal*. 36, 4.
- Greeley, Andrew M. (April 10, 1987). My say: Who reads book reviews anyway? *Publishers Weekly*. 231, 78.
- Greenhaigh, Michael J. (November, 1987). Reviewing sound recordings—retrospect and prospect. *Audiovisual Librarian*. 13(4), 220-223.
- Grefarth, Richard W. (Fall, 1986). How to be a book critic. *The Reference Librarian*. 15, 35-46.
- Groek, Edward. (December, 2003). Some guidelines for writing book reviews of novels and nonfiction. *Catholic Library World*. 74(2), 109-110.
- Harry, Veronica & Charles Oppenheim. (August, 1993). Evaluations of electronic databases, part 1: Criteria for testing CD-ROM products. *Online & CDROM Review*. 17(4), 211-222.

- Hauptman, Robert. (Spring, 2002). Reviewing: Ethical failures. *Journal of Information Ethics*. 11(1), 3.
- Hearne, Betsy & Roger Sutton, Eds. (1993). *Evaluating children's books: A critical look*. Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois.
- Henige, David. (October, 2001). Reviewing reviewing. *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*. 33(1), 23-26.
- Horning, Kathleen T. (1997). Writing a review. In *From cover to cover: Evaluating and reviewing children's books*. New York, NY: Harper Collins. 176-194.
- Jacquette, Dale. (January, 2004). How to referee a philosophy journal article. *American Philosophical Quarterly*. 41(1), 1-4.
- Katz, William A. (1985). The sunny book review. In Keller, Dean H., Ed. *Libraries in the 80's: Papers in honor of the late Neal L. Edgar*. New York, NY: Haworth Press. 17-25.
- Katz, William A. & Robin Kinder, Eds. (1987). *The Publishing and review of reference sources*. New York, NY: Haworth Press.
- Kister, Ken. (Spring, 2002). The conscience of a reference reviewer. *Journal of Information Ethics*. 11(1), 66-70.
- Kuo, Hui-Min. (Summer, 2000). Reviewing electronic reference sources: A preconference organized by the RUSA CODES Materials Reviewing Committee. *Library Collections, Acquisitions, and Technical Services*. 24(2), 270-273.
- LaGuardia, Cheryl. (February 1, 1999). Databases and disc reviews (introductory paragraphs). *Library Journal*. 124(2), 127.
- Lang, Jovian. (Fall, 1986). Evaluation of reference sources published or to be published. *The Reference Librarian*. 15, 55-64.
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- MacRae, Cathi Dunn. (June, 2001). Minding our P's and Q's: VOYA's book review rating system. *Voice of Youth Advocates*. 24(2), 89.
- Natriello, Gary. (April, 2000). Reviewing books. *Teachers College Record*. 102(2), 267-270.
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- Notess, Greg R. (April/May, 1998). Tips for evaluating web databases. *Database Magazine*. 21(2), 69-72.
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- Papinchak, Robert Allen. (April, 2001). Judgment calls. *The Writer*. 114(4), 40.
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- Reese, Debbie. (Spring, 2000). Contesting ideology in children's book reviewing. *Studies in American Indian Literature*. 12(1), 37-55.
- Rettig, James. (September/October, 1996). "Beyond cool:" Analog models for reviewing digital resources. *Online*. 20(5), 52-64.
- Rettig, James. (Fall, 1986). The reference reviewer's responsibilities. *The Reference Librarian*. 15, 21-33.
- Rettig, James & Cheryl LaGuardia. (July/August, 1999). Beyond "beyond cool:" Reviewing web resources. *Online*. 23(4), 51-56.
- Riemer, Andrew. (Summer, 1995/1996). Reviewing the reviewers. *Voices*. 5(4), 102-105.
- Riggan, William. (Spring, 1997). Plagiarism and reviewer/editor responsibility. *Journal of Information Ethics*. 6(1), 34-38.
- Robertson, Ray. (Fall, 2003). Critics wanted. *Publishing Research Quarterly*. 19(3), 45-47.
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- Schlachter, Gail A. (Summer, 1988). Reviewing the reviewers. *RQ*. 27, 468-470.
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Sweetland, James H. (Spring, 2000). Reviewing the world wide web: Theory versus reality. *Library Trends*. 48(4), 748-770.

Thomson, Ashley. (December, 1991). How to review a book. *Canadian Library Journal*. 48(6), 416-418.

Tobin, Ronald W. (October, 2003). The commensality of book reviewing. *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*. 35(1), 47-51.

Carlo, Paula Wheeler & Allen Natowitz. (1995). Choice book reviews in American history, geography and area studies: An analysis for 1988-1993. *Library Acquisitions: Practice and Theory*. 19(2), 153-165.

Cohen, Steven M. (July/August, 2003). Alternative online book review resources. *Public Libraries*. 42(4), 226-227.

Credaro, Amanda. (November/December, 2004). Walking through the valley of the shadow of happy talk: Book reviews and collection development. *Library Media Connection*. 23(3), 51.

Marcuse, Michael J. (1990). *Reference guide for English studies*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Martin, Andre. (January, 2004). On the book review as a form and a forum. *Journal of*

C. A Selective Listing of Journals that Publish Reviews Written by Librarians and Information Professionals

This is a listing of academic and scholarly periodicals that regularly publish book reviews written by librarians and information professionals. In addition, these periodicals may also include reviews of journals, nonprint materials, multimedia, and electronic resources. In most cases, Internet addresses are provided. Web sites may include submission guidelines for book reviewers and an e-mail contact. An e-mail message allows the opportunity to introduce oneself and to ask if book reviews are being accepted. Publishers may ask for a writing sample or resume before considering a review. Some publishers welcome unsolicited contributions.

AcqWeb <http://acqweb.library.vanderbilt.edu> provides many other publishing avenues and ideas for current and prospective book reviewers.

Book Collector. <http://www.thebookcollector.co.uk>

Booklist. <http://www.ala.org>

The Charleston Advisor: critical reviews of Web products for information professionals.
<http://www.charlestonco.com>

Choice Magazine: current reviews for academic libraries. <http://www.ala.org/acrl>

Collection Building. <http://www.emeraldinsight.com>

College & Research Libraries News.
<http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubs/crlnews/collegeresearch.htm>

Computers in Libraries. <http://www.infoday.com>

Criticas: an English speaker's guide to the latest Spanish language titles.
<http://www.reedbusiness.com>

E-Streams: electronic reviews of science and technology references covering engineering, agriculture, medicine and science. (electronic journal) <http://www.e-streams.com>

Information Management Journal. the journal for the information management professionals. <http://www.arma.org/publications/journal>

Information Technology and Libraries.
<http://www.ala.org/ala/lita/litapublications/ital/informationauthors.htm>

Issues in Science and Technology Librarianship: a quarterly publication of the Science and Technology Section, Association of College and Research Libraries.
<http://www.istl.org/authors.html>

The Journal of Academic Librarianship. <http://www.authors.elsevier.com>