

Publication Peer Review: An Annotated Bibliography. Bruce W. Speck, compiler, Greenwood Publishing Group, Westport, CT; 1993. vii + 277 pp., hardcover, \$65.00.

Peer review has come under increased scrutiny in recent years as the incidence of fraud, duplicate publication, and plagiarism has risen. In fact, the peer review system has generated enough concern to fuel two conferences, both sponsored by the American Medical Association, and much debate in the scientific and medical literature.

Publication Peer Review: An Annotated Bibliography, the second volume in a series of bibliographies on editing (and the seventh volume in a series of bibliographies and indexes in mass media and communications), is a timely compilation of this literature. Although Speck states that "the study of peer review is in its infancy" (p. vii), the 780 sources listed in this book seem to belie this statement. However, Speck goes on to note that few of these sources represent studies grounded in empirical research; most offer opinions and advice about the peer review process. It is his hope that this volume will serve as a stepping-stone for scholars interested in conducting empirical studies of peer review.

The book consists of three sections: the literature on journal peer review, the literature on book peer review, and the literature on grant peer review. The entries are arranged alphabetically by author within each section but are numbered consecutively throughout the book (e.g., entry 643 concludes the literature on journal peer review; entry 644 begins the literature on book peer review). Speck provides complete bibliographic information for all literature sources from 1960 to 1991, along with their respective Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) numbers. These numbers are standard designations used by libraries throughout the United States, Canada, and Great Britain; they facilitate literature retrieval by circumventing inaccurate or cryptic reference citations.

By far the largest section in the book is that on journal peer review, which contains 643 sources. In contrast, the section on book peer review contains only 21 sources, and the section on grant peer review, 116. Speck has gone to great lengths to provide comprehensive annotations for each source. These read less like an abstract than like a detailed article summary. For instance, instead of simply saying that an author gives five criteria for successful peer review, Speck lists all five, with a brief sentence about each. If sample forms are included in the reference cited, this is noted in the annotation. In addition, for each source, Speck provides cross-references to any sources dealing with the same topic and to any sources in which the author's remarks are refuted or supported. Although most annotations comprise a paragraph of moderate length, some are nearly a full page.

A vast array of topics are discussed in the sources cited: reviewer responsibilities, bias against women authors, blinding vs. nonblinding of reviewers, duplicate publication, computer-assisted referee selection, acquisition and peer review of book manuscripts, and rejection of grant applications, to name a few. Some of these topics have spawned a lively debate in the literature, with authors rebutting others' opinions and offering their own, only to be rebutted by yet another

author. All of these are faithfully cross-referenced by Speck, making the reader feel somewhat like a spectator at a tennis match in which the players keep changing.

Because Speck has obviously put a great deal of work into this book, it is unfortunate that it was not closely edited. In a number of places, subject-verb agreement is lacking, and typographical errors are evident. On occasion, sentences are awkwardly or incorrectly phrased, requiring two or three re-reads to grasp their meaning. Overall, however, this is a relatively minor flaw, one that is admittedly annoying but does not detract from the book's content and goal.

Two indexes are provided: an author index and a subject index. Although reading an annotated bibliography is not everyone's idea of excitement, for anyone interested in studying the peer review process, this book is a one-volume literature searching tool. Editors who are critiquing or seeking to revamp the peer review process at their institution will find the detailed annotations and cross-references an immense help in their quest for solutions. Those who are interested in learning more about the peer review process at, say, the National Science Foundation or the National Institutes of Health, or even at another journal, can begin their search with this volume. This book is a valuable resource for those seeking to address the weaknesses in the peer review system, which has been blamed, at least in part, for the current increase in the incidence of scientific misconduct. Hopefully, Greenwood will decide to publish subsequent editions with relevant literature updates.

Kendall Wills Sterling

Kendall Wills Sterling, ELS, is a biomedical communications consultant providing writing and editing services to individuals, corporations, and publishers. She is a member of the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences and currently serves on CBE's Author's Editors Committee.