

# *The Southeastern Librarian's* Tips for Writing a Good Book Review

## Writing a Book Review

Writing book reviews can take time and practice. Though, not as time intensive as writing the book, care should still be taken when putting together a book review. For *SELn*, book reviews should be an honest evaluation of a book. They should be a cross between a customer review (written by the reader of the book offering recommendations to other readers) and an editorial review (a formal evaluation of not only the main content but also how it contributes to the subject area or how it compares to other writing in the genre/field).

Be honest, but be tactful. Writers put a considerable amount of time and effort into writing a book. If you were reading a review on a book you had authored, what you would like to read? Providing an honest review is important to the *SELn* and its readers. If you like a particular title, think about how the book supports a particular area of study, how it might appeal to readers, how comprehensive the coverage is, or how well it is written. Likewise for titles that you might not like – think critically about why you might not recommend the book, did the author fall short in supporting the thesis, was there a lack of support for the author's arguments, or does the material not contribute to the subject area.

## Book Review Recommendations

The following offers some recommendations when writing a *SELn* book review.

- Read the book thoroughly. Do not rely on other reviews of the title and do not skim the book to get the main highlights.
- Provide a recommendation (e.g. is this book a good addition to an academic or public library; would it be useful for a particular audience; further/other reading recommendations – especially if you did not like the book).
- Offer a summary of the book you are reviewing.
- Think about the who, what, when, where, and why of the book.
- Avoid reviewing books where there may be a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest (e.g. you know the author personally; the author is a coworker, friend, or family member; you are the author of or a contributor to the book).
- Use quotes sparingly. When you do use them, make sure they exemplify the book.

## Additional recommendations from [Owl Purdue's Online Writing Lab](#)

- Keep your audience in mind who have likely not read the book.
- Write about the primary themes and characters – leave out the minor information.
- Your evaluation – **take personal experiences out of the book review and avoid using 1<sup>st</sup> person.** How does it compare to other books the author has written? How does it compare to other books covering the same subject matter? How effective was the author(s) in presenting the information? Was the book logical and accurate?

*The Southeastern Librarian's* Tips for Writing a Good Book Review

- Evaluate the research and assessment of supporting materials (graphs, charts, notes, bibliography, indexing).