

The SRV JOURNAL

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Basic guidelines on writing a book review for the SRV Journal

Some contributors to this journal have asked for advice on writing book reviews. In response, we put together the following basic points and we hope that you find them helpful. These guidelines are meant to be suggestions; they are not meant to be followed slavishly, nor are they meant to be exhaustive. For example, we would like a book review to address the six general points described below, but not all of the questions included in points three and five necessarily have to be discussed. There may also be additional questions or points of interest which you want to cover.

A format note: a book review for this journal should run one to three pages (font Times New Roman, size 12, single space; or roughly 500 to 1500 words) at most. Please contact the editor with any other questions. Thank you.

1) Heading: Include bibliographic information about the book, such as:

Author
Date of publication
Title
Edition (if any)
Place of publication
Publisher
Number of pages
Price (if applicable)

Sample:

Wolfensberger, Wolf (1998). *A brief introduction to Social Role Valorization: A high-order concept for addressing the plight of societally devalued people, and for structuring human services (3rd ed.)*. Syracuse, NY: Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agency (Syracuse University). 139 pages. \$ 14.00.

2) Reviewer information: Name and title (if any) of reviewer

Sample:

Reviewed by Thomas Smith
Director, Boston ARC (USA)

Reviewed by Mary Johnson
Citizen Advocate, Toronto, Ontario (CANADA)

3) Background information about the book and its author: Include information that might be helpful for readers to know, such as:

What is the background of the author?
What kind of work is s/he doing?
What kinds of books has s/he written before?
What type of book is it (e.g., fiction, nonfiction, biography, autobiography)?
Why was this book written?
What topic or problem(s) does the book address?
What is the context of the book (e.g., historic, political, societal, scientific)?
Who is the intended audience of this book?

4) Summary of the book's content: Summarize the main themes or points of the book. As applicable, you may want to outline the major assumptions of the author. Describe what evidence s/he uses to make his or her points. Quote or paraphrase the author as appropriate.

This part of the book review should not be evaluative, but as descriptive as possible, and attempt to give readers a clear overview of the book's content.

5) Evaluation of the book: This is the section in which you should share your relevant personal opinion(s) about the book, but make sure they are well distinguished from those of the author. Describe your criteria or perspective for judging the book, then state your evaluation of it. (A good rule of thumb is that this part of the book review should comprise about one-third of the length of the entire review.) The following issues might be discussed here:

In what ways is the book relevant to Social Role Valorization?
What are the book's major strengths and weaknesses?
Does the author have the necessary expertise to have written this book?
Which significant points are missing, if any?

Are the author's underlying assumptions valid?
Are the arguments used by the author, and the evidence to support these arguments, valid and convincing?
Did the book fulfill its promises, e.g., Did it cover what it said it would cover? Did it answer the questions it raised?
Why do you agree/disagree with the author's opinion?
How does the book compare to other books on the same topic?
Who would benefit from reading this book?
What is the major lesson to learn from this book?
How has your outlook on the topic changed by reading this book?
How did the book affect you?

6) Conclusion: Tie together any issues raised in the review, and end with a concise comment on the book. If you like, you can offer advice for potential readers.