

EVALUATING JUSTICE: CANADIAN POLICIES AND PROGRAMS, Joe Hudson and Julian Roberts, eds. (Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing Inc., 1993)

Delivered with this text book was a slip sheet from the publishers, identifying the work's main purpose as being:

...intended as a supplementary text for undergraduate and graduate courses in criminology and program evaluation. It is also invaluable for evaluation practitioners, policy and program analysis in government, and consulting firms.

It was forthright of the publishers to so define the aims of the book, because it neither falls desperately short of, nor particularly surpasses those aims. The construction of this book is, without doubt, that of a compendium of reference material for courses and as a set of illustrations of methodologies for program evaluation in various criminal justice fields. Except, arguably, for the word "invaluable" in the quote (which exceeds the more applicable adjective "useful"), the book aspires to those rather modest achievements and reaches them.

But, unfortunately, that is about it. The contributors to the book appear to be very qualified, able and knowledgeable people. The articles collected in the book reflect hard work in the acquisition, organization, analysis and evaluation of practical information applicable to different aspects of criminal justice, law reform, policing and corrections. The topics are, by and large, pertinent to modern theories applicable to those fields, and the conclusions reached are relevant, although there is room for debate about some of them. Nonetheless, one is left on a first reading of the book wondering what the advantage was in having all of these articles collected into a single reference text.

Because they must have known this, the editors open the book with an enlightening chapter which, ultimately, goes beyond summarizing the content of the book to an effective promotion of the idea of regular evaluation of justice theories and programs. There is much to be said for this. There still is a lot of "deconstruction" going on in relation to Canada's justice systems. In particular, there also seems to be still a lot of strength in the rather dejected "nothing works" philosophy of corrections — if one can draw from the political and social discourse reported in the modern media. To propose the more optimistic view that there are reliable ways to evaluate our justice programs and policies is also to propose that it remains possible for us to develop programs and policies that actually work.

Authorities in many fields associated with the administration of justice could be forgiven if they might sometimes become afflicted with a sense of futility and despair. It follows that works like this book are, indeed, valuable. The development and promotion of reliable methods for justice system evaluation can have the result not merely of re-invigorating the constructive debate on the respective merits of justice system alternatives, but of enhancing the confidence held by participants in the institutions of those systems of the validity of those institutions or systems.

As it promises, the book also contains useful articles on a variety of topics, sorted out by the editors into programs respecting "Police", "Courts" and "Corrections". Nonetheless, after the second chapter dealing with the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, the sorting seems to come down to convenience and the centre does not really seem to hold.

Several chapters speak to the implications or effectiveness of changes in legislation respecting Firearms and Sexual Assault under the *Criminal Code* and of changes to the *Parole Act*. Two assess, with statistics, recent developments in policing. Two further chapters speak to Legal Aid programs, particularly from the perspective of the current debate over the financing of alternative delivery systems ["judicare", staff counsel, and mixed systems]. Three chapters assess specialized programs respecting offenders, again focusing largely on data analysis.

There can be no doubt that each piece would be of interest or use on an individual basis to persons in a particular sector of the administration of justice. It seems unlikely, however, that all or even a majority of them would be of interest to the same sector. In a sense, the book comes down to a rather complex salad bar of research material. The further suggestion of the publishers that the book has value as, in effect, sample demonstrations of various means for evaluating aspect processes of the administration of justice is also valid, but it would, by itself, be a somewhat thin reed on which to construct a shelf reference text book.

In the result, then, the book is quite useful but not "invaluable". It contains studious research material that would, by their form and content, normally be valuable contributions to, when contained separately in, one or another of the myriad number of journals of law, politics, sociology and criminology. This is basically a compilation of such material and not really a book in the traditional sense, although the editors do not pretend that it is.

To be fair, it must be noted that the editors state inside the book that they do not seek to profit personally from this work and that the receipts, if any, from its publication and circulation are to be used to support evaluation projects under a society that seems aimed at that beneficial goal. It follows that the editors deserve credit, just as the contributors do, for their unselfish efforts in producing this book as a reference source. I myself found the content of some chapters quite edifying and others less so. As a reviewer, however, I cannot overrate it. It is a specialty book with a collation of work in specialty fields. The book is worth its modest cost.

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