Evaluating Professionalism in Online Book Reviews - AP2 Annotation Guidelines

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The purpose of this annotation task is to determine how "professional-sounding" an Amazon ebook review is. Standards of professionality vary depending on context, and in the case of online reviews, reviewers that seem professional are more likely to influence other people's purchasing decisions than those that are not. There are many elements of a book review that can make it appear more professional; for this task, we focus on two components, the first one being slightly more important than the second:

1. Structure: how closely the review follows the typical structure of a book review. For the purposes of this task, we simplify the requirements for a "professional" book review to be one that contains these three elements:
   a. A clear recommendation or opinion about the book being reviewed, usually (but not always) found in either the first or last sentence.
      i. Sometimes, the recommendation or opinion is not stated directly in a review and is instead heavily implied by other elements of it e.g. the tone used to summarize the book. Such reviews *do not* satisfy this criteria for this task.
   b. A summary of the content, and perhaps the style, of the book, usually lasting for no more than 2-3 sentences.
      i. Some reviews will contain a "comparative summary" that compares the book being reviewed to other similar books or media e.g. books in the same series, movie adaptations. These *do not* count as summaries for this task.
   c. Justification for the reviewer's recommendation or opinion based on evidence from the book.
      i. Sometimes, this justification is directly included in the summary or implied by it. This *is allowed* for this task, so read each review carefully.
      ii. Statements indicating the reviewer's emotional response to the book that do not cite specific elements of the book *do not* count as justification for this task.
2. Flow: how well the review develops its argument and maintains a logical thread throughout. Each review should be evaluated for flow based on:

a. Whether the reviewer stays on-topic throughout the review. Off-topic elements are those that can be removed from the review without significantly altering the overall argument. Off-topic elements include, but are not limited to:
   i. Praise or criticism for the author or book that is not backed up by evidence from the book itself e.g. "X is so, so HOT!", "Author Y, you're bad and you should feel bad"
   ii. Delving too deeply (more than 1-2 sentences) into a specific flaw or strength of a book
   iii. Theorizing about elements of the book or related works e.g. "I have a hunch that X is actually Y", "I think X will get to do Y in the sequel"
   iv. Personal details about the reviewer that do not factor meaningfully into any elements of the structure e.g. "I read this while on vacation", "This book reminded me of the time when…"
b. How clearly and succinctly they make their points. Issues that may impede clarity and/or succinctness include
   i. Sentences that are out of place
   ii. Overly long or short sentence length throughout
   iii. Constant usage of extraneous words
   iv. Confusing terminology used throughout

Based on these criteria, each review should be given a professionalism rating ranging from 1 to 4 inclusive. In the interest of simplicity, no decimal ratings are allowed. Reviews that are rated a 4 should satisfy all of these requirements very well; conversely, reviews that are rated a 1 either do not satisfy any of these requirements or satisfy very few of them to a poor extent. Reviews that are rated anywhere in between may satisfy some requirements but not others. Generally speaking, we want each review's rating to reflect how likely an average ebook reader who has not read the book being reviewed will trust the review based on its structure and flow. A rating scale, along with descriptions of the types of review that may warrant each rating, is included.

While annotating, it is important to keep in mind that book reviews on online marketplaces are held to a much lower standard than those published by accredited news sources and periodicals. Subsequently, we are not expecting any reviews in the dataset to be masterpieces or even print-worthy, but we are interested in how close they get to achieving that standard. Try to focus primarily on the structural aspects of each review when assigning ratings while minimizing the influence of the actual content, especially if the review discusses uncomfortable or socially taboo subjects. Example reviews are included along with the rating scale descriptions to guide the annotation process.

Ignore spelling and grammar issues unless they affect either of the two criteria of a professional review listed above. For example, a few typos in an otherwise well-structured, concise review should not bring down its rating, but a review containing so many spelling and grammatical mistakes as to make it difficult for the reader to follow the argument should be given a lower rating. Similarly, issues pertaining to the reviewer's style such as usage of colloquialisms and an overabundance of exclamation points should only be relevant as they pertain to the listed criteria. Looking up definitions of certain words or phrases is fine, but again, the reviewer's use of language should not be the primary focus.

Finally, do *not* evaluate a review based on how convincing it seems - the focus of this task is on how well-presented each review is, not on whether you agree or disagree with them! No research on the books being reviewed outside of what is presented in the reviews should be necessary for this task.

Annotation Rating Guidelines

Annotations are rated from 1 through 4 with 1 being the least professional and 4 being the most professional.

Rating: 1

Description: This review either does not meet any of the criteria for a professional review or only satisfies one criterion.
Examples:
"review to come"

"A likable enough book but sluggishly paced"

"April 17, 2014 : Wow that suspense update : April 12, 2014: After 2 years, I'm going to try this book again, now that the trilogy just ended a few days ago. I hope I'll like it more and maybe I'll also get into it. (Probably because I was 12 years old when I was trying to read this...too young.) this book wasn't my type of genre, i suppose ... i got bored, but it did seem interesting and i hope i'll try to read it again."

Rating: 2

Description: This review meets some of the criteria for a professional review.
Examples:
"This was such a cute read. It was filled with culture and sci-fi which are my favourites. I loved it."

"Mwah. Not for me. Did not expect it to be so.. empty? Like it didn't make me feel anything. Not impressed to be honest"

"After the first read, this book is the worst one in the Harry Potter series. Characters are not as likeable as they are in the other books. However, I recently reread it (after reading book 6), and found it to be a very good read."

Rating: 3

Description: This review meets most of the criteria for a professional review.
Examples:
"I read this once in high school, and re-read it to my boys this year. It is wonderful--the pacing is good, the adventure unique and the main characters admirable (and loveable). We have now moved on to Fellowship of the Ring."

"7th&up, 3.5 stars A solid fantasy adventure that has a little bit of everything- Chinese folktale elements mixed with romance, suspense and issues of loyalty, class, courage and sacrifice. I enjoyed Fei's tale, even though it didn't stick with me after the story was over. This book was acquired at BEA15 in exchange for an honest review"

"Not nearly as strong as the first two books. Overly long, very repetitive. This is overloaded with dead end subplots and boring retreads of stuff already done better in the first two books. I was fine with how everyone ultimately ended up, but it was such a drag to get there. However, I was pleasantly surprised and very glad that (big spoiler about the ending under the tag) the protagonist's love interest dies at the end both because I thought that was a bold and novel choice and because he was such an annoying character and their relationship was implausible."

Rating: 4

Description: This review meets all of the criteria for a professional review.
Examples:
"This is an excellent story. It picks up the Outlander epic and turns it into legend. To brave the stones and fate to rekindle a love separated by centuries, Claire proves her valor and regains her heart. Not to be missed."

"Stylistically, I found this book quite witty and well written. India Black had a clever, biting narrative voice that immediately hooked me in. However, style was all this had going for it. The actual meat of the story was totally underwhelming. I was not intrigued or entertained by the plot at all, and no character outside of India leapt off the page to engage me. Even India's charms as a protagonist wear off because her narration, while fun at times, is one note."

"I have always felt that there is something inherently sinister about marionettes: The fixed expressions with their gleaming, shallow eyes; Their jagged, spider-like movements; The hollow, clicking sounds that serve as harbingers of their physical intentions. To me, they have never seemed whimsical or childlike. Donohue capitalizes on that not uncommon reaction with an eerie yet lyrical tale of a woman who seeks escape from danger and drudgery and finds herself in a nightmare world that little by little feels like home, and the earnest husband who yearns to bring her back to his side even if the journey towards that end threatens to cost them both more than they can spare. Allegory, adventure, magic and menace combine in a unique take on an old myth. This ARC was obtained at BEA16, in exchange for an honest review."