

Book Reviews

David E. Wilson, *National Planning in the United States: An Annotated Bibliography*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1979, \$20.00

What could one expect from a 2000-item bibliography, the background to and by-product of four–five years of work on a monograph on national planning? One could reasonably anticipate that the bibliography be exhaustive, selective, or definitive. The present volume is none of the above. The bibliography is presented in interesting categories that presumably match the author's forthcoming monograph: the background material; national planning from 1900 to 1972; related planning trends in the 1970s, running from business planning to futures research; a fivefold taxonomy of approaches to national planning—the rational, incremental, mixed scanning, general systems, and learning adaptive approaches; the growth and resource national planning debates of 1973 to 1976; and finally, American national planning, the future.

Unfortunately, the author presents his bibliography in a way totally free of imagination, insight, and application of established techniques—necessary to make it a successful document. There is no annotated index of authors, thereby making it extremely inconvenient to check the collateral work of a particular author. There is no systematic grading or evaluation of the work. Comments, frequently running four–eight lines, are often useful, but they are haphazard and impressionistic. Also, there is no obvious rule given for the selection of items.

In regard to the topics with which this reviewer is most familiar, the author's understanding of his subject is questionable and his selection of items to annotate is dubious and capricious. For example, in the area of technology assessment 29 items are noted; only 11 of those sources are substantially devoted to technology assessment. Several have no direct connection with the subject. The author has evidentially failed to understand the conceptual meaning of technology assessment. Consequently, he has folded under that rubric, and thereby misplaced, a number of works on technological forecasting. With one exception the 29 items are books or congressional documents. Citations are given neither to actual technology assessments nor to the journal articles that would certainly be more up to date. The latest material cited by the author is 1976, which virtually assures that none of the original material is later than 1974.

The futures research treated in 32 references could only reasonably be described as arbitrary and uninformed. It does not provide an adequate nor a balanced introduction to the study of the future; nor does it focus sharply on the futures literature that deals with planning.

The topics under environmental and resource planning are interesting but seem to overlook as a direct subject for treatment the environmental impact statement and its enormous collateral literature, which is one of the most exciting planning developments in environmental affairs. One would expect to find energy planning under resources, if not under a separate category. But none of the recent elements of energy planning such as "Project Independence," the Ford Foundation sponsored study, or related major and minor planning works seem to find an obvious or readily discernible place in this bibliography. One of the categories, planning technology, is interestingly ambiguous. It seems to deal primarily with half of the ambiguity that has to do with technologies for planning,

which turns out to be mostly computers and modeling. Again, the treatment appears to be both arbitrary and capricious. The other half of the ambiguity is neglected.

It is unfortunate that a book representing such an obviously great amount of work and such a great expenditure of effort by the author should apparently have no relationship to what the user of the bibliography would want. It is irksome and self-defeating as a convenient guide to the literature. The publisher is carving out a niche for itself as a publisher of scholarly and semischolarly works and is to be severely chided for not having standards of format and coverage to which its authors must hew. The narrowest self-interest should drive the publisher to do better.

At a price of \$20 the reviewer recommends that you wait until your library acquires a copy, look forward to Westview Press remaindering it, or make your own trip to the card catalog. On the other hand, any bibliography is better than no bibliography.

JOSEPH F. COATES

J. F. Coates, Inc.

Washington, D.C.