REVIEWS

Textbooks and Schooling in the United States, by David L. Elliott and Arthur Woodward (Eds.) Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 1990, 246 pp. (ISSN: 0077-5762).

This book contains an edited collection of 14 chapters, compiled as the 89th Yearbook of The National Society for the Study of Education. It is the Society's second Yearbook to examine the development of textbooks and instructional materials in the United States. In 1931, about 60 years ago, the Society's 30th Yearbook was the first to address issues related to textbooks used in American schools. In this current book, an outstanding set of authors discuss the history, research, and status of elementary and secondary school textbooks.

The first section of the book is composed of chapters on the publication of textbooks during the 1930 to 1950 Progressive era and the 1950 to 1980 Postwar era. The nature of the textbook industry, as well as the changes that emerged are documented for each era. Also, the curriculum reform movements are discussed in relation to the textbook industry having the capability to lead both the development of curriculum and textbooks.

At the conclusion of the Progressive era it is apparent that textbooks did not direct school curriculum, they only reflected it. Toward the era of the Postwar era, the industry had control over the development of multigrade level textbooks in various subject areas. So, in the decades of 1970 and 1980 textbooks did guide teacher initiative and creativity in planning. They grew in size, improved in aesthetic appeal and satisfied a wide range of influences. The content changed to include the representation of minorities, women, the handicapped, and the aged. Other influences targeted the authors' and the publishers' use of research on vocabulary and readability levels. The application of research findings to

produce textbooks to minimize students' reading difficulties became a major concern. The importance of knowing which research findings to use, and when and how to use them did present a problem.

Textbook development and production are explained in the second section of the book titled, "The Textbook Industry." Some of the chapters in this section elaborate on the need to create quality instructional resources. Also, an emphasis is placed on training teachers to use textbooks to enhance student learning and conduct research on how different students learn best from textbooks.

There is the sentiment in Chapter 6 that textbooks could become a catalyst for improving instruction, teaching practices, classroom management, and homework. This provident idea is aligned with the notion of using new computer technology and software to revolutionize textbook publishing. In addition, the reader is made aware in Chapter 7 that most innovative trends and novel ideas start with the small publishers. Since they have a history of fulfilling the need to market new and unproven textbooks.

Whether publishers are large or small, they have the responsibility of holding textbook authors accountable for the quality of textbooks. Several ways to ensure quality are recommended in Chapter 8. It refers to: 1. giving greater attention to evaluating textbooks, 2. helping teachers learn how to evaluate textbooks, and 3. conducting reviews of textbooks by academic colleagues.

A multitude of societal elements and other controlling factors are discussed in the third section of the book. It is evident throughout the four chapters in this section that publishers, authors, school board members, textbook committee members, teachers, and parents all have conflicting priorities. The chapters focus on an array of problems publishers have with the forces of marketing, controversial content, and pressure groups. Plus, there is the textbook adoption process which is often complicated by

REBATES ON TRAVEL TICKETS River Oaks

TRAPEL

OFFERS TAA MEMBERS SUBSTANTIAL SAVINGS - HERE'S HOW:

- 1. Make your own reservation directly with the airline of your choice.
- 2. The same day, call RIVER OAKS, with Flight number Dates Origin/Destination

Names
Price quoted
Credit Card Information

Mailing Address

3. RIVER OAKS issues tickets that day, mailed certified mail.

4. RIVER OAKS encloses a rebate check, for A. \$5.00 on tickets costing from \$200 to \$400.

B. \$10.00 on tickets costing from \$400 and over.

C. On multiple tickets each under \$200, total cost will be used to determine rebates.

5. In addition, RIVER OAKS offers TAA members a rebate of \$50.00 per cabin on any cruise of seven nights or more booked through River Oaks.

RIVER OAKS TRAVEL 1701 River Oaks Drive Calumet City, IL 60409 800-422-1221

a lack of uniformity and consistency in school districts located throughout the United States.

Lastly, the fourth section consists of two chapters that motivate the reader to think in terms of the future. Computer-based textbooks are introduced as a new approach for publishers to consider. Through this approach teachers would have computerized teleconferences to discuss and compare the organization of curriculum, student achievement, and lesson planning. Their classroom practices and skill development on the use of textbook materials would be shared with other colleagues via the computer. These concluding ideas leave the reader with the impression that textbooks shall continue to be useful objects. Furthermore, they will remain even as our educators reform the curriculum and develop new technologies.

Theresa M. Bey, Ph.D.
Teacher Education
The University of Georgia