This book is one of the most impressive and extensive collections of material relating to the research process. Of course, the ten parts that contain forty-two chapters and 370 pages are not all going to be relevant for postgraduate social scientists. Or are they? The more quantitative orientation in some of the chapters is hard going. But in an age when the Economic and Social Research Council requires postgraduates to engage with both qualitative and qualitative methods, Greenfield’s edited collection encourages the reader to think of new method options when carrying out research. The book explains many methodological alternatives that are available to all postgraduates.

After an introductory section, the second part of the book examines the concept of support. Coleman examines how postgraduates should and can handle supervisors, as well as exploring how the role of the researcher evolves with pro-activity during the research process (Race, 2001). One major advantage of the book is the amount of information it contains on Information Technology and Computers (ITC). Much of the good literature on the research process (for example: Cryer, 2000; Gilbert, 2001; Philips and Pugh, 2000; Seale, 1998) tends to mention ITC but not in any substantial depth. Resse talks about processor capacity, desktops, OPAC, Endnote and how to use e-mail effectively instead of a displacement activity. Grant describes how postgraduates can use statistical packages and Ayers looks at how to use the internet. I would strongly recommend Hal Sosabowski and Bourner’s chapter for all postgraduate students before they start a literature review on searching in unfamiliar fields.

King has the fourth part of the book to himself on creativity. Four chapters deal with creative thinking and when to use it. The research type chapters are very statistical in orientation but de Vaus’s chapter on survey research is very useful for postgraduates interested in questionnaire design, backed up yet again
with more internet links (176). The sixth part of the book on measurement, I found the most helpful methodologically. Lynn talks about the principles and importance of sampling. He continues by raising the electoral register and postcode addresses as methods when sampling in human studies. Smith provides contact details for population statistics in the UK with international comparative information (206-207). Rowlands analyses the problems on measuring data while Pandyan et al. provide website information for software and hardware in relation to measurement packages (234).

The seventh part of the book on analysis is very important. Hand describes elementary statistics and then goes onto further statistical methods. Computer resources and packages are mentioned by Lunneborg. Greenfield then encourages the researcher to look at spreadsheets, and not just Excel but more advanced packages, such as Unistat. The next part of the book is statistically complex and deals with: mathematical; deterministic and statistical models. Within the penultimate part of the book, Greenfield talks about the need to write continually throughout the research process. Levy discusses the importance of presentation, reports and talks. He continues with good advice on how to use: graphs; pie charts; tables; figures; photographs; cartoons; and, colour if needed and required in presentations.

The final part of the book summarises issues which are prevalent throughout most of the chapters. Anderson examines how postgraduates can exploit technology. Greenfield’s book is rich in information on not how to exploit technology but how to use it to your advantage. There are many ITC links to www pages which will be useful to all postgraduates. Indeed, the book has a supporting website of weblinks and references at www.arnoldpublishers.com/support/researchmethods. Coates also discusses career opportunities for postgraduates and the ‘skills employees seek’ section (362-364) will be useful, with C.V.’s in mind for finding jobs in the market-place. This is ultimately a helpful book and I would recommend it to both postgraduates and supervisors because of the doors it opens to new methods and inter-disciplinary
approaches. This would increase all of our research understandings of the social world.

References:


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