distinctive core (of other disciplines).

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**Dennis F. Fisher and Charles W. Peters, editors.**
**COMPREHENSION AND THE COMPETENT READER.**
**Inter-Specialty Perspectives.**
**New York, N.Y.: Praeger Pubblishers, 1981.**
**166 pp. $23.30.**

Six years ago the theme of the 19th International Convention of the International Reading Association was "The Teacher - Key to Excellence in Reading." From the 24th Convention comes a book entitled, "Comprehension and the Competent Reader - Interspecialty Perspectives." They've come a long way baby.

Any sign of excellence in thinking, organizing, and communicating ideas would be difficult to find in this collection of articles. The book comprises eight chapters, each submitted by a specialist, psychologist, or researcher either in the reading field or in an associated area of learning.

The preface announces the authors' joint concern that "very little information is being passed from the ivory tower of the basic researcher to the classrooms of the teacher and vice versa." The stated goal of the **project** (the word used, instead of book) is to "provide a forum of mutual concern about comprehension in the competent reader that would allow the basic researcher, applied educational researcher and classroom teacher to effectively 'inter-act' and 'to bridge the information gap'." Quite what is meant by a "forum of mutual concern" is not clear to this reader. It is clear, however, that no bridge could sustain the weight of the ponderous prose used throughout the book.

Chapter One, by Dennis Fisher, addresses the need to understand comprehension competency, to get "people who can read but do not read again and to effectively match research to text to method to reader." No comment.

In Chapter Two Bonnie Mahers describes basic research implications for prose comprehension from an "interactionist perspective." Chapter Three, by Nancy Marshall, addresses basic research implications for reading instruction. James Flood focuses on a particular aspect of comprehension known as "inferencing" in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five Don Nix comments on "The Teaching of Reading Comprehension" via a "Links" system he has developed to teach the theory underlying

text comprehension. And Charles Peters, in Chapter Six, analyses the extent to which prose comprehension research has been used in instructional materials and the development of such materials at secondary level. The use of basic and applied data is seen by Mr. Peters as being minimal. No wonder, if all the data have been so badly written about as in these articles.

In Chapter Seven Thomas Fitzgerald comments on Mr. Peters' chapter, but takes a slightly different perspective. He points out that many teachers are becoming "material bound" to the neglect of the textbook. Presumably, subject matter is being neglected in favour of so-called "reading aids." In the last chapter Gwendolyn Johnson and Lester Lefton assume, so the preface tells us, a "bottom-up" position. They describe "information extraction capabilities based on the physical characteristics of text and reading necessary to effect the change from print to purpose." Your guess as to what this could mean would be of great interest to me.

Some of the findings and ideas expressed are of a minimal interest. However, the obstacle to the stated goal of transferring information is the way most of the articles have been written and set up. The book is loaded with jargon. What can a "competent reader" make of "top level structure", "advance organizers", "fluent and not so fluent readers", "concept attainment", "inference generating", "micro and macro propositions", etc? None of this is illuminated by the deadly dull analogies about cancer and forests, and by diagrams which would defeat an engineer. Don Nix, in his "Links" article, states unequivocally that "reading comprehension is notoriously difficult to teach, regardless of the education level or age of the student." Perhaps it would not be so difficult (if indeed it is) if those whose business it is and whose concern it should be to think and write clearly had not forgotten or lost that capacity.

Rather than attempt the customary review, I have tried to let this book speak for itself through the quotes; to do otherwise would have been as futile as praising an Emperor's new clothes.

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Dwight W. Stevenson, editor.
COURSES, COMPONENTS, AND EXERCISES IN TECHNICAL COMMUNICATI(
Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1981.
230 pp.

Why can't Johnny, B.Eng., M.B.A., write?
The current "literacy crisis" is of concern to educators at all levels and in all fields, from elementary school to the engineering