

# Book Reviews

Henry W. Castner.

**SEEKING NEW HORIZONS:**

**A PERCEPTUAL APPROACH TO GEOGRAPHIC EDUCATION.**

Canada: McGill Queen's Press, 1990.

224 pp. \$34.95.

"One wonders what is left to be said of a field which uses a loose confederation of separate subjects for its content and has little or no agreement regarding its goals and objectives" was the manner in which social studies was evaluated in 1977 by a publication of the **National Council for the Social Studies**. Since then, however, there has been growing concern for those separate subjects and their role in compulsory education, here defined as Grades 1 to 10 inclusive. Geography has been specifically named as an education concern in such national surveys as *A Nation at Risk* (April, 1983) and *American Education, Making it Work* (April, 1988). More international surveys have included the National Geographic Society's *Geography: An International Gallup Survey* (1988), which included Canada, and the latest, November, 1989, which is entirely devoted to *Geographic Knowledge in the Soviet Union*. Concern for geography as a discipline in its own right can also be found in *Curriculum Update* (November, 1989), along with history and economics.

*Seeking New Horizons* is of this genre but centres more on cartography, the visual perception, and the methodology associated with a particular form of music training/learning, aural perception. In order to examine these, the author reviews several fields, viz., chapters on visual systems, music, art, and science connections, culminating in "Cartographic Communications" and "Perceptual Approach to Geography." While he is appreciative of common ground but does not equate one discipline with another, his awareness of how and where they overlap to form valid linkages is perhaps the keynote importance of this book. There is in content a range of uses from arithmetic to

zoology, from Gestalt psychology to Piaget, touching base with the academic, the methodological, and the educational as they radiate from geography.

The matter of visual perception, however, in this day and age, is dominated by television and, from the educational point of view, as well as evaluations of that technology, pro, contra, and neutral. With the combination of TV visual with TV stereophony, one is strongly tempted to refer to James J. Gibson (1904-1979), an American experimental psychologist whose work in visual perception was carried on at Cornell. Gibson was more inclined to use the real world rather than the laboratory for his experimentation thereby putting himself literally in the same environment as the practising geographer, the world of 3-D. His suggestion that unless the head is held in an unnaturally still position and the eyes fixed on the same object, the visual field is alive with change or "transformation." Does that sound like a familiar position for TV viewers?

In geography in general and cartography in particular, the transference of these 3-D data to a 2-D surface, i.e., a map, the current cartographic practice in education, may well be self-defeating in this new age of electronic technology. Somewhat ironically, more attention is paid to Gibson's work today because of its relevancy to computer vision. Gibson is referred to ten times in this work. It might have been a better seam to hew in this day and age of computer imagery, familiarity, and variety as found amongst today's pupils than the music and auditory relationship. That relationship, certainly from the point of view of this reviewer, had all the appearances of an interesting point made during after-dinner conversation but little real contribution to geographic education – especially cartography.

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**Richard A. Fiordo, Editor.**  
**COMMUNICATION IN EDUCATION.**  
**Calgary, Alberta: Detselig Enterprises (1990).**  
**403 pp, \$21.95**

As the preface of the book states, *Communication in Education* was designed "... to apply communication studies to the training of teachers and instructors generally." The editor (Fiordo) has assembled twenty-nine essays or articles, written by himself and colleagues in Calgary, that are concerned with educational communication.