Research Design is a slim but remarkably comprehensive text. In this second edition of his book, John Creswell succeeds in offering novice (and not so novice) researchers from multiple disciplines a useful comparison of three broad methodological research approaches: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. Within these descriptive comparisons, the reader is taken step by step through the key elements of the actual process of doing research. One is offered, for example, a template for preparing a research protocol, a proposal for theses/dissertations and for writing a scholarly research journal article. ‘How to’ details are given that are often left out of more methodologically-focused research texts. This book could be used as a primary text for graduate/postgraduate courses that give an overview of the various research methodologies, or specifically explore ‘critical inquiry’ or ‘evidence-based practice’. It would also be a good reference text for courses focusing on specific methodologies i.e. qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods. I see it as a ‘must’ on the bookshelves of all faculty who guide and supervise the research of graduate/postgraduate students.

My attention was caught immediately by the way Creswell challenges the supremacy of one methodological approach over another throughout the text. Equal space and focus is given to each. He subtly subverts the traditional dominance of quantitative methods in his sub-title ‘Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches’, by reversing the taken-for-granted methodological positioning. I tested this out on colleagues, showing them the title of the book and who it was by, then a few days later asking them to recall it. With few exceptions, most of my ‘subjects’ unwittingly reinstated ‘quantitative’ to first position. How many of you reading this book review have only now become aware of the methodological reversal?

The first section quite appropriately deals with ‘a framework for design’. Clearly Creswell has tried hard not to use abstract philosophical concepts. Words commonly explicated in research texts such as paradigm, ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology, are only briefly named (pp. 4–6). Terms such as ‘framework’, ‘approaches’ and ‘knowledge claims’ are used, less intimidating for graduate and postgraduate students. I would have liked, however, more philosophical discussion in some areas. For example, the term ‘postpositivism’, although linked back to 19th century thinkers such as Comte and Newton (p. 7), requires a brief discussion of its links to positivism and logical positivism, and the philosophical challenges that brought about its recent use. These other terms continue to be used to describe the paradigmatic underpinnings of quantitative methods and in many cases, rightly so. Although values concerning ‘what is scientific research’ are changing, I don’t believe all scientists or their respective disciplines as yet, hold to postpositivist assump-
tions. Still, Creswell does provide excellent references and suggests readings at the end of the first chapter for the student wanting to understand more.

This text is not an easy one-sit, cover-to-cover read. The chapters that follow the introduction give ‘how to’ details using Creswell’s comparative framework, so at times ones thinking has to jump to and fro from one framework to another. The structuring of the text with its use of headings, bulleted information, examples, figures and tables, checklists, and exercises serves well a more ‘dip-in read.’ A student who is undertaking mixed methods research, for example, need read only those sections in each chapter pertaining to that approach. The final three chapters, however, focus exclusively on the procedures and methods of each individual framework and end the text well.

Creswell positions himself on the positive side of the current debate on the validity of using a mixed methods approach. His explanations are well reasoned and his descriptions useful. This is one of the first texts to include a ‘how to’ carry out mixed methods research. A section on ethical considerations (Chapter Three) and a more comprehensive discussion on literature reviews (Chapter Two) are also welcome. Though issues raised in the ethics section are somewhat expanded on in later chapters, more discussion of specific issues such as self-determination and researching with vulnerable groups such as children, indigenous people and the mentally unwell, would have been of value. Including specific readings on ethical considerations may have met this need.

To conclude, this text offers readers from varying backgrounds a user-friendly handbook on research design. Its language is accessible to a novice researcher and its chapter structuring facilitates its usability. Although written with the American market in mind, this book would be useful to Australasian postgraduate students and their teachers and supervisors.

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**Effective Writing for Health Professionals: A Practical Guide to Getting Published**

Megan-Jane Johnstone (2004)

*Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW; ISBN 1 74114 225 3; PB 223 pp; AUD 29.95 incl. GST*

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The Preface to *Effective Writing for Health Professionals* concludes with Johnstone’s expressed hope that ‘upon reading this book, health professionals who have previously felt daunted by the prospect of writing will feel more confident about engaging in the writing process, get their work published, and will succeed as authors in their field’. This well-written and readable text certainly provides an apt vehicle for bringing Johnstone’s hope to fruition.

There is certainly a need, and thus a market, for such a text, for, as Johnstone observes, despite an increasing need for health professionals to contribute to their respective professions’ unique body of knowledge by writing and publishing in a range of media, many potential contributors are daunted by the thought of moving beyond the day-to-day professional communication that constitutes the bulk of their writing, to writing for publication.

The text is well structured, with a range of handy tips presented under the following chapter headings: Writing and publication in the health professions; Getting started; The writing process; Winning habits of successful authors; Producing a work; Troubleshooting; Promoting