Putting together a book from conference presentations is a tricky business. Often, papers given at conference are necessarily brief and insufficiently detailed due to the time constraints of oral presentations. Perhaps more often than is desirable, work is presented in a less-than-final stage—empirical studies may still be in progress and conceptual papers may not be fully formulated. In addition, many conferences are forums for presentations by graduate students and junior faculty—people who are beginning their careers and who may not have published much. For a book of this sort to have merit, selected papers should be complete and make significant contributions to the field. The majority of papers in this volume fail on both counts.

All of this raises the question of a suitable audience for the book. The editors’ intention is to provide professionals and students in the discipline of communication with a handy source of recent work in the area. However, researchers expecting an exposure to a wide range of methodological and conceptual approaches will be disappointed by the narrowness of the range and the generally poor quality of the studies, and professionals anticipating material of practical value for use in education, industry, or organizations will find little more than cursory coverage of issues and approaches. If the book has any value it may be that it can provide students who are new to the field with a sampling of research topics. However, they might be well advised to terminate their reading after the Introduction and pursue study elsewhere.

Reviewed by: Linda McMullen
University of Saskatchewan

Behind the Telephone Debates
Carol L. Weinhaus and Anthony G. Oettinger

Does "post-divestiture" ring a Bell?

By now many communication theorists are familiar with the rush of academic analysis and industry reports that followed the breakup of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) in 1982. Although the initial excitement may have subsided to some degree, this new book nonetheless proves to be a welcome addition. It should appeal to expert and curious novice alike as a concise book that seldom wanders from its path. Not only does it provide a detailed, informative examination of the operations of the telephone industry, but in so doing it seeks both to articulate and to place the important policy issues in context. Perhaps its greatest accomplishment is the neutrality it largely succeeds in achieving.

In tracing the historical roots of the telecommunications industry, the authors focus on the swing between monopoly and competition for both equipment and services. The first hints of competition appeared after World War II in the area of such user-related equipment and the Hush-A-Phone, a device attached to the receiver.
Although AT&T's objections were rejected in federal court the issue of harming the network endures today in, for example, the connection of electronic devices which may result in incompatibility.

The physical equipment that comprises the traditional telephone network is intelligibly explained in terms of the industry's accounting of associated costs and the rationale behind the rate structure and regulation. Cost allocation and revenue recovery methods, concepts sparking debate both before and after divestiture, are more or less demystified. The authors present a good example of pre-divestiture cost separations, one using the 1971 Ozark Plan which resolved the 19-year war over state toll settlements. Not until the twelfth chapter do they deal with access charges and other changes brought about in the post-divestiture era.

Because the book is a presentation of research reports written for the Program on Information Resources Policy at Harvard University, it might be expected that it would be somewhat disjointed. While conceptually self-contained, however, the chapters are at the same time complementary. The heavy reliance on acronyms might require the reader to flip regularly back and forth but together with the reliance on statistics it provides the opportunity to experience industry discourse. The book's appendices are well-documented, and include useful chronologies.

While the authors succeed in grounding terminology in the day-to-day operations of the industry and care has been taken to explain the politics underlying the evolution of many of the issues, ostensibly missing from the text is a discussion of the social implications of the various methods of accounting for costs and what competition and deregulation might mean to the individual. To be fair, the authors did not undertake such a study. But one is left wondering about the individuals wishing to use the services, who are in the final analysis often left far behind the telephone debates.

Reviewed by: Suzanne Scheuneman
Simon Fraser University

Docudrama: Fact and Fiction
A Videocassette Review
Michel Choquette, National Film Board

Professor Tom Waugh of Concordia raised the question. "Why no seams?" he asked Donald Brittain. Brittain, Canada's pre-eminent documentary filmmaker, had just completed a succinct and well-illustrated exposé of his own work. showing an excerpt from CANADA'S SWEETHEART: THE SAGA OF HAL C. BANKS, he commented on his desire to join dramatized scenes with archival footage to form "a seamless web".