Casley, D. J., and D. A. Lury, 1981 *Data Collection in Developing Countries,*
Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, xi + 244 pp, £15.00

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Reviewed in the context of the issues discussed in this *Bulletin,* this book is very useful in the emphasis it gives to the practical problems of collecting data in sample surveys but weak in that it is far too uncritical of survey techniques *vis-à-vis* other forms of data collection with respect to cost effectiveness issues. During the Rapid Rural Appraisal Conference, several papers (Carruthers 1979, Ellman 1979, Fallon 1979 and Moore 1979) pointed out the inappropriate professional standards of statisticians and their failure to treat statistics as servant rather than master. So the first paragraph of this book reads ominously when the authors state their terms of reference as 'we consider . . . techniques of inquiry from the case study to the census, but give major emphasis to data collection by sample survey' and then go on to say that sampling theory:

'is one of the major intellectual achievements of this century. It provides a logical conceptual framework by which estimates of the characteristics of a population can be inferred from the results of an examination of only a sample of that population' (p 1).

From the first page they accept that sampling does reflect neutral selection and so miss the opportunity to use their considerable experience in developing countries and discuss critically the weaknesses of the sample survey as a form of data collection. The book is full of excellent advice on methodology, and leaves the reader able to better carry out sample surveys, but says little about the most appropriate form of collecting information under constraints of time and cost. Casley and Lury devote two paragraphs to such issues in Chapter 2 (Deciding What Data to Collect) under the heading "'Quick and Dirty' Methods", a phrase used much in the RRA Conference. They address themselves to this issue in a most disappointing and unhelpful manner. They say that, for the surveyor:

'There is a real dilemma here. The extension of statistical work and the growing acceptance of the need to involve the surveyor more regularly and immediately in policy issues can be set back if the surveyor behaves as if he can operate only in ideal conditions and cannot adapt to the stresses and strains of helping decision takers effectively. General experience, an assessment of the user's ability to appreciate and accept data uncertainty, the nature of the topic, the extent of related information, and the relevance of the data to the policy issues will all help the surveyor judge how far he can go' (p 29).

Yet there are signs of how the authors could have looked more comprehensively at the effectiveness of different forms of data collection. Although they devote little to considerations outside of survey techniques, with only ten pages on the study approach (and eighteen pages on censuses) their presentation of this is meaty and their integration of case-study material with other methods suggests they could have said much more.

Although the authors say so little on the cost-effectiveness of data collection, they do provide a wealth of practical advice and in this respect have written the most useful book on survey methods that this reviewer has seen. In Chapter Two they emphasise the need to use existing knowledge (an important message in the RRA Conference—see Chambers 1980) and are refreshingly down-to-earth about how to calculate sample size. They show, in the Chapter on Censuses that their hearts are firmly in the right place, by stating:

'. . . this work (censuses of business organizations) may appear more pleasant and influential; and the heavy field involvement in household and holding investigations, often in remote parts of the country, with poor transport facilities, may make these assignments less popular. Steps should be taken to adjust rewards so that this imbalance does not result in the field enquiries losing—or never receiving— good staff' (p 47).