

Editor's note: the review opposite relates to a book reviewed in Newsletter 38; the authors complained to the Editor that our reviewer was overly harsh and on one point mistaken. Our reviewer admits to miscounting the pages of Chapter 4, « Working in France » (4.46% of the book and not as she suggested 3.82%), and apologises, but on the other points maintains her assertions. The opportunity to reply was offered, but not taken up. Since, unaware of this and without having read the previous review, our colleague spontaneously offered the following, we are happy to print it.

Russell Cousins, Ron Hallmark & Ian Pickup
Studying and Working in France: a Student Guide

Manchester-New York: Manchester University Press, 1994

x + 314pp Pb £7.99 isbn 0-7190-4220-8
 reviewed by Geoffrey Hare, University of Newcastle

The Year-abroad tutor's task is probably the hardest of all administrative jobs in French departments. This uniquely helpful source of information, a more wide-ranging and more complete version of an earlier publication by the same authors from Birmingham University, will prove an essential source of reference for them. It is aimed first of all at British language students preparing for and undergoing their year abroad, but also rightly claims to be of use to other young Anglophones living and working in France, including American students on their Junior Year Abroad. The first section is a concise description of the role of Universities in higher education in France, and types of courses available. There is a useful section devoted to Assistantships (seen from the student's point of view), but the largest part is on university study. The bureaucracy of French universities is revealed to its full extent in the chapters describing their accommodation and welfare services and in the practical and extraordinarily detailed advice to students on how and when to apply for courses and accommodation, register, enrol, look after their personal safety and disentangle themselves at the end with all their documents and bank-balance intact.

If tutors refer their students to this book, there is no longer any excuse they weren't given the right information. The completeness of the advice is remarkable, and supplemented by a glossary of terms and abbreviations going beyond the purely educational (cdd, contrat à durée déterminée, could have been included,) and an appendix giving specimen letters and cvs. The mysteries of the caution, the état des lieux, the feuille de soins, the partiels and so on are revealed. Hundreds of

addresses are included, but not one for information on the gap scheme. Tutors might wish for a supplement on the workings of the Erasmus scheme (or Leonardo and Socrates now) which is perhaps underplayed. 190 of the 314 pages are devoted to profiles of the 23 main university towns. The chapter on Paris is deliberately relatively thin since it is difficult for British undergraduates to apply to Parisian universities with the exception of the British Institute. The bip and the Cité internationale do get due attention.

The assumption (perhaps a bit dubious, but understandable in terms of the sources of information available to the authors) that their audience will be mainly interested in Arts Faculties means no section on the city of Marseille, but a long one on Aix-en-Provence. While some readers might have wished to see something on the missing Universities, among whom are Angers, Orléans and Pau, it would be unrealistic to expect equally comprehensive sections on all universities, although a bare list of those missing, with an address, might have been a useful appendix. The sections on the individual universities contain every piece of practical information (with addresses and telephone numbers) a prospective student could think of: the university and its disciplines, courses for languages undergraduates, courses for foreign students, crous and private-sector accommodation addresses, a guide to the town and surrounding area, and other tourist information including cheap hotels and restaurants, leisure facilities, museums, mjc, theatres, cinemas, post offices, health care, emergency numbers, and travel details, although not which Paris railway station to take to get to the provincial towns.

Looking at towns I know, the detail seems reliable and up-to-date, although the choice of cheap hotels and restaurants is inevitably rather personal (one might have expected mention of the two Flunch in the centre of Nancy for example), but fit for the purpose. Much of the information is provided by reports from Birmingham students. The odd detail shocks: why is Saint-Nectaire cheese associated with Toulouse rather than the Auvergne? But in general it should prove extremely reliable, and every French Department must buy a copy, and recommend it to students. The tone is business-like and only occasionally lightened by the sardonic understatement recognisable to hardened pros of the year-abroad tutorship, but the authors dare even say things such as « politeness does matter in fostering relationships ».

The book is the result of research in more than the loose meaning of the term, and shows a sophisticated knowledge of French society, culture and institutions, such that it deserves to be deemed countable in the Research Assessment Exercise, although I can see some die-hards (who have never been year-abroad tutor) arguing against its inclusion. For lovers of trivia (perhaps not so trivial actually), the reference section reveals the current extent of naming public buildings and institutions after the great and the good of France's cultural heritage, and one wonders what sort of mental picture of France's cultural iconography their students will return with, having seen that Montaigne, Rabelais, Pascal, Stendhal and Jules Verne have universities named after them (Bordeaux, Tours, Clermont, Grenoble, and Amiens), Malraux a Maison de la Culture (Reims), Aragon a library (Amiens), Maupassant and Camus cités universitaires (Lille), Flaubert a mere pavillon (Rouen) while Mauriac has to be content with a commissariat de police (Reims), Diderot a swimming pool (Rouen), and Châteaubriand a sub-post office (Tours). John Lennon even sneaks in as a Centre Culturel et Social Municipal in Limoges. There is a year-abroad dissertation in there somewhere just waiting to be written.