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BOOK REVIEW

Bibliography of Bioethics, Vol. 13

LeRoy Walters and Tamar Joy Kahn, Editors

Kennedy Institute of Ethics: Washington, D.C., 1987.

The annual publication of the *Bibliography of Bioethics* provides anyone interested in bioethics with the best primary access to the burgeoning literature in bioethics. This selective bibliography offers a well-indexed entry to the most popular current topics in bioethics. Compared to other research instruments, this screened bibliography offers elements worth noting.

The bibliography's stated purpose is to address the dimensions of bioethics which include health care ethics (i.e., rights and duties of the patient) and research ethics (i.e., value problems in biomedical and behavioral research). The major topics include: bioethics in general, codes, health care, contraception, abortion, population, reproductive technologies, genetics, mental health, human and animal experimentation, transplantation, and death and dying. Two thirds of the 2,250 documents listed were published in 1985 and 1986 with the remainder dating back as far as 1975. "The Bibliography seeks to be comprehensive for all English language material", including journal and newspaper articles, monographs, articles in books, court decisions and bills. This volume adds to the more than 25,000 cumulative entries of all the previous volumes which are also accessible through computer searches of *Bioethics*.

This volume provides advantages for both the novice in bioethics and the researcher looking for the most salient publications. The abstracts included in some of the bibliographical entries provide research efficiency. The volume's thesaurus offers concise definitions by either pointing the researcher to the more specific terms used in bioethics or directing the reader to broader areas which might be overlooked. Moreover, since some research proceeds on educated guesses, the title index in the back of the volume offers propitious cross-referencing. For example, while one might be concerned with the issue of medical confidentiality in general, the title index indicates the issues of confidentiality located under other major headings which might otherwise be overlooked. Novices however, must be careful with the bibliographical entries which include no abstract and only keywords, because keywords out of context could lead one on a wild goose chase to unproductive resources.

The major weakness of this volume can also be considered its strength: the volume is selective. Not all the issues or articles in bioethics are considered. Investigators undertaking thorough research will find this bibliography to be an initial, but not exhaustive resource. While the selection criteria of the *Bibliography* remain unstated, entries are chosen, by and large, from a wide interdisciplinary basis. Researchers with strong interests in the clinical aspects of bioethics would find insufficient data in this bibliography and would find many more entries from clinical journals in Medline, a computer bibliography of only journal publications in health-care. As the *Bibliography* grows as a critical tool in research, academics will demand a clearer articulation of the editorial inclusion criteria of this instrument. Interestingly, in personal searches of this bibliography, articles which would be considered additions to the debate on the topic of allowing to die for example, were not listed.

With each volume's publication, selection of the headings has become more judicious.

For example, repetitious or unclear headings such as Quality of Life, Killing, and Transexualism have been omitted, while new sections added this year include separate headings for Cryonic Suspension, Psychosurgery and Public Health. Future editions of the *Bibliography* can be strengthened by inclusion of business ethics, a growing interest in the health-care setting.

While the *Bibliography* perhaps overstates its comprehensiveness, no doubt it offers a respectable starting point. Libraries in academic institutions should not be without a copy. People working in bioethics will find this hard copy time-saving and less expensive in comparison to computer searches. Hospital administrators interested in physician education, for example, can offer quick summaries of bioethical issues with the bibliographical abstracts.

Compared to the less accessible computer bibliographies such as *Bioethics* and *Medline*, the *Bibliography of Bioethics* offers both the novice and professional a comparatively inexpensive handy hard copy of the most recent literature in bioethics.

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