

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and
Social Sciences

Great Plains Studies, Center for

February 1993

**Review of *Rural Information Systems: New Directions in Data
Collection and Retrieval* by Rueben C. Buse and James L. Driscoll**

Paul H. Gessaman
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsresearch>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Gessaman, Paul H., "Review of *Rural Information Systems: New Directions in Data Collection and Retrieval* by Rueben C. Buse and James L. Driscoll" (1993). *Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*. 108.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsresearch/108>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Rural Information Systems: New Directions in Data Collection and Retrieval. Rueben C. Buse and James L. Driscoll eds. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1992. x + 458 pp. Figures, tables, chapter reference listings, and index. \$44.95 cloth.

For most of us collecting, compiling, and drawing inferences from data are never-ending activities. Some data-based decisions, such as decisions of a driver who observes and responds to a traffic control device, can be readily completed. Others, e.g., decisions that adjudicate streamflow among competing users, can require complex and protracted decision processes. The capability of a society

to make sound data-based decisions is founded on accurate and timely data that are readily available without undue cost. The presumption that such data are not presently available to persons working with rural problems, issues, and policies provides the guiding thesis of this book.

It is the proceedings of a two-day symposium held in July of 1989 and attended by "Rural social scientists from seven professional associations" (p. vii). The Economic Statistics Committee and the Information Retrieval Committee of the American Agricultural Economics Association organized the symposium. Fifteen major papers (now chapters) by highly-qualified contributors examine the nation's rural data system from a variety of perspectives.

The authors indicate that, to the extent they exist, data for rural areas are used in many ways; social science research, rural policy development, public sector decisions, business management decisions, and numerous other actions and activities of public and private sector entities are based on available data. Several emphasize the need for locality-specific, sector-specific, and business- or household-specific data that will support analysis of the internal dynamics of rural communities. Research agendas (most are lists of unresolved issues) and related data needs for agriculture, rural communities, rural institutional systems, natural resources management, and domestic and international development are included. Data needs for these research agendas, and examination of alternative approaches used in collecting, compiling, and disseminating rural areas data, are recurring topics. Changes in resource allocations and data systems are advocated to improve the availability and quality of rural data.

Chapters 3 and 4 may be of special interest to readers as they provide numerous insights on survey methods and technology applications in primary data collection. Throughout the book, well-written and very readable narrative, figures and tables clearly convey the authors' ideas. Both writers and editors have done well.

Almost any social scientist with interest in the social and economic viability of rural communities, and those involved in policy decisions affecting the rural sector of our economy will find at least something of interest in this volume. For the teacher, it may be particularly helpful as a source of readings for graduate seminars in research methods, for rural policy courses, or for business management and marketing courses. It is not intended to be recreational reading. However, it is good reading for the student, the social scientist, or the government official with interests including policies and practices affecting rural areas of the United States. **Paul H. Gessaman**, *Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*.