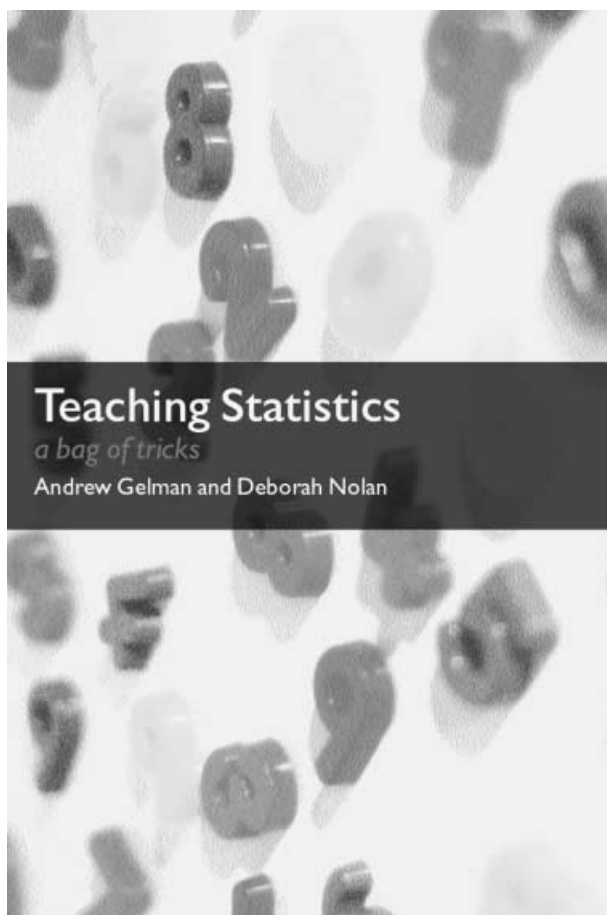


# BOOK REVIEW

Our reviewer here is Margaret Rangelcroft of Sheffield Hallam University, England, a member of the Editorial Board of *Teaching Statistics*.



Andrew Gelman and Deborah Nolan. Oxford University Press, 2002, £25.00, ISBN 0-19-8572247

Don't be misled by this title. 'A bag of tricks' suggests a miscellaneous collection of tips for teachers, an impression that is far removed from the truth. Yes, it is a collection of ideas for enriching the teaching of statistics, but these ideas are presented in a systematic way with careful suggestions for their use.

The authors state that the book is aimed primarily at teachers of statistics in colleges and high schools (in the American sense), with some additional

ideas for teaching at a more advanced level. They also stipulate that the activities are suited to classes of 60 students or fewer. I would argue that most of the suggestions could be adapted fairly easily for use with both younger students and those on advanced courses, and in some cases for larger lecture groups. For example, there are ample ideas here for work on university service courses, including one section on 'Ethics and Statistics' that I found particularly interesting. Most teachers are, of necessity, masters of ingenuity in taking good ideas and tailoring them to their own situations. After all, no two groups of students are alike! There is ample scope for this here.

The book is divided into four parts, an introduction, a section containing a comprehensive collection of activities, a section on how to integrate these into teaching and a final section on more advanced topics. Within each section there are clearly labelled sub-sections that permit easy location of the relevant material. This is clearly a book that users will want to dip in and out of, and the structure supports this approach with a good subject index as well as an author index. In addition, as early as the introduction there are tables linking concepts and activities.

The activities themselves include demonstrations, examples and project ideas. The authors freely admit that many of them are not new ideas, but this is the first time I have seen so many collected together in one resource. Certainly I have come across some of them before, but at the same time many are new to me (something that does not happen very often when you have been working in this area as long as I have!). They are presented clearly and simply as suggestions, without any prescriptive rules but supported by the authors' own experiences in using them. They are intended to enrich more usual approaches such as textbooks, lectures, homework, quizzes and tests, rather than replace them.

The advice on implementation in Part II is practical, sound and encouraging, with no suggestion that here is the answer to all the reader's problems, just lots of help and inspiration.

It is certainly a book that I will come back to time and again!

MARGARET RANGECROFT