

BOOK REVIEW:

The Dynamics of Progress Time, Method and Measure

by Samuel L. Macey,

published by The University of Georgia Press, 1989

Reviewed by Ken Krechmer

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While not a recent book, *The Dynamics of Progress* warrants attention from the standards community as it provides a broad and useful history of technology related to rationalization (the author's term for standardization both formal and otherwise). The book reports "an almost symbiotic relationship between the rationalization of measurement and communications, and related developments in pure and applied science, as well as technology." The author was a Professor of English at the University of Victoria and has written several other books relating to the history of time.

The first three chapters of this book, Part I concern the rationalization of time. This is a direct area of the author's expertise and provides an excellent and very readable view of the development of standards for time, calendars and chronology as well as the vast impact on the society these developments caused. "Rationalization has made the Western world what it is today, a technocracy that is condemned and desired, envied and emulated." Detailed historic examples make these discussions quite interesting to read. Extensive references make this an excellent source book for further research into the history of technology.

Part II, Rationalizing Measures and Communications, provides an excellent history of standards, Hindu-Arabic numerals and the ascendancy of English. Although the chapter on the ascendancy of the English language is considerably more general and thereby weaker. The strong human desire for a unique and identifiable culture with the possibility of a unique language is not given sufficient consideration.

In Part III, Rationalizing Production, the author explains with many well researched examples how rationalization changed labor into production and

begat the industrial revolution. A very well researched view of the development of standardized production processes and the impact these had on society. Carrying the concept of rationalization to a very broad conclusion the author notes that the concept of freedom itself emerges from the rationalization of a human being as equal to all other human beings.

For standards researchers interested in the immense impact of standards on society, Professor Macey has provided a sweeping view. For anyone interested in the history of technology with details such as the derivation of the names of the weekdays this book is quite enjoyable. It is now out-of-print but still available thanks to the wonders of the Internet.

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