

Review of Edward Berry, *Writing Reasons: A Handbook for Judges*, 4th ed (Toronto: LexisNexis, 2015), pp 158. ISBN: 978-0-433-47964-2.

*John C. Kleefeld**

Edward Berry's *Writing Reasons*,¹ though aimed at judges who provide written reasons for their decisions, deserves a wider audience. With this version, it may get just that. Originally published in 1998 and self-published for the first three editions, this delightful and highly instructive handbook has now been published by LexisNexis. While I lament the loss of some of the third edition's form—its cover, its elegant typesetting, its clever Shakespearean epitaphs leading off each chapter (it still has epitaphs, but now mostly from other sources)—I laud the substantive changes and the decision to leave the book's basic format intact. That format is one in which the author—an emeritus professor of English and long-time leader of judicial writing workshops—goes from macrocosm to microcosm, continually imparting wisdom along the way and asking readers to test how well they've imbibed it through end-of-chapter exercises and answer keys.

Berry's first macrocosmic point is *context*. It is the driving theme of the first three chapters—"Context First", "Introductions", and "Organization"—and of much of the rest of the book. The notion that information needs context isn't hard to understand, says Berry, yet it is often forgotten for two general reasons. The first is that, in working through a problem, we tend to write for ourselves rather than our readers. The second reason, closely related to the first, is that we assume reader expertise or knowledge that doesn't actually exist. Journalists are aware of both tendencies and work hard to overcome them. Two further reasons for forgetting context apply to judicial writing, says Berry: legal training and the traditions of legal communication. The *facts-law-application-conclusion*

* Professor and Dean of Law, University of New Brunswick (formerly Associate Professor, University of Saskatchewan).

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¹ Edward Berry, *Writing Reasons: A Handbook for Judges*, 4th ed (Toronto: LexisNexis, 2015).