warmth, mystery, danger, and even, thanks to Hollywood, romance. No other part of our earth can give us all that in one place!

The problem for tourists is which beach provides what. It was the problem I encountered when bringing my new European family to Florida where I had just accepted a position as director of coastal studies. I didn't know which beach was best for us, much less for tourists! (Out of this quandary was born a guidebook to "Florida's Sandy Beaches" published in 1985 and reviewed in this journal.)

As Dr. Leatherman correctly points out, the famous beaches are not the best beaches. Indeed, any beach heavily promoted through advertising would never be a "best beach" because hotels are the reason behind the promotion and not the beach. Dr. Leatherman's response to this lack of good beach information is this book. He uses a rating system of 50 criteria on a sliding scale of 1 to 5 to select the best beaches in six regions of the U.S. for eight beach categories: swimming, walking, wilderness, sports, city, novelty, surfing, and best overall. These beaches are then described in a folksy, personal manner that only partially seems to rely on his selection criteria. Thus, his touted "objectivity" of beach selection is submerged and not self-evident from his descriptions of the various beaches. Nevertheless, this book is a handy, easy to use guide to some of America's better beaches. However, it is necessary to supplement this book with local maps and parking information. Fortunately, addresses of state tourism offices are included to attempt to get this necessary information to use the beaches described. A section on beach safety is a welcome and informative part of the book, as is the section on beachcombing.

The rating system presumably employed in his selections is generally complete and simple to understand and apply. The only missing element I could see was the criterion of "type of beach use" with a sliding scale from family use to nudist use. This element is of great importance in selecting any beach! From the eight categories of beach included it is not evident which beach would be the best family beach. Indeed, all 50 criteria are of equal value in his system, meaning that "longshore current" is equal in value to "amenities." The score for best beach is the simple sum of the 50 rated criteria. If he weighted these ratings in some way to select for his eight categories such is not evident or even discussed in this book.

Any book by definition is incomplete and contains errors. In any future edition Dr. Leatherman should consider adding detailed maps and parking information for the beaches he selects as "best" in order to make the book more self-contained and useful. (In fact, one of his regional maps shows Pensacola in the wrong place.) Definitions of his eight categories would be useful, as well as more "objective" descriptions of the beaches selected. Replacing some of the slightly out of focus photos would help too, including adding a photo of seashells in his beachcombing section. Highlighting the topics under beach safety would be useful too. A section on beach use policy problems to keep the beaches "best" might be useful to add. Including a note about others rating beaches annually such as the NRDF's beach pollution and the EU's blue flag beaches would be useful. Finally, the word questionnaire has two "n's."

My final comment is my surprise at Dr. Leatherman's self-promotion as "Dr. Beach." I think of so many beach scientists more deserving of such a mantle to include Per Brun, Orrin Pilkey, Paul Komar, Orville Magoon, *etc.*, to name only a few. Any sense of objectivity would seem to go against adopting such a title for oneself!

Nevertheless, buy the book as it delivers on what it promises. We need all the books we can get to encourage a more informed use of beaches by the public. This book may also push local governments into improving their beaches and facilities in order to become candidates for "best beach."

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Blondel, P. and Murton, B.J., 1997. **Handbook of Seafloor Sonar Imagery.** Eastergate, Chicester, West Sussex, England: Praxis Publishing Ltd. Hardcover, 75 Sterling. ISBN 0-471-96217-1.

With the tremendous improvements made in undersea imaging systems during the past decade, it should come as no surprise to marine scientists that a book has attempted to encapsulate recent advances in the technology and geological results of seafloor mapping. The Handbook of Seafloor Sonar Imagery is an early effort aimed at describing the hardware and software utilized in imaging the seabed, along with some of the geological results from the late 1980's into the early and middle 1990's. For their effort at bringing "seafloor science" to a broad readership, the authors, Philippe Blondel and Bramley Murton, are to be commended. The penalty for being a pioneer in a rapidly expanding field, however, is equally rapid aging of information. Thus, this book provides a broad and accurate overview of acoustic imagery, but one which is in jeopardy of becoming out of date within a few years of publication.

The book begins with almost 50 pages dedicated to sonar data acquisition and processing. The following 176 pages, most of the book, sequentially cover underwater geological settings: deep-sea trenches, mid-ocean ridges, abyssal plains, continental margins, and coastal environments. The final 50 pages deal with sonar anomalies and computer-assisted interpretation followed by a 24 page bibliography. There are also abbreviated bibliographies following each chapter and a very small glossary.

The material on how systems work is well written, although more diagrams and examples would have helped. This will not tell an expert much of value, but will introduce the in-depth treatment. There is an excellent four page table listing most of the common imaging systems and their specifications. Mathematics and engineering principles are kept to a minimum in this section and there is an illustration on each page.

Though the major component of the book, the treatment of geological environments is disappointing. A large part of the problem is the small format of the book and of the resulting images; 15 cm by 13 cm is the largest image and a typical image is only 10 cm by 7 cm. This is simply too small to depict features like spreading centers and subduction zones. Line-drawing interpretations are presented and are necessary to see what is discussed in the text. There is seldom a scale or geographic reference on an illustration which adds to the difficulty of interpreting some figures. Few seismic reflection profiles accompany the surficial images, which is unfortunate because the combined data sets are complementary and greatly facilitate interpretation.

The authors are apparently most interested in deep-sea environments and the equipment involved in that work. Thus, although the main focus is on geology, the text is frequently punctuated with digressions into acoustic anomalies and artifacts of a specific device. There is also a strong emphasis on "deep-water" settings (144 pages on environments deeper than the shelf break) versus "coastal environments (28 pages), and nothing on estuaries, rivers or lakes. The coastal environments chapter was authored by Doris Milkert and Veit Huhnerbach. There is also a 6 page color plate section with illustrations that combine side scan and bathymetric information.

The price of the book, 75 pounds Sterling (about $110 US Dollars) is high, but probably not unusual for a specialty volume. The format is small, however, and the diagrams do not equal those of J. Fish and H.A. Carr ("Sound Underwater Images," American Underwater Search and Survey, Ltd., Cataumet, MA, USA, 1990) which is focused on coastal settings. The Handbook of Seafloor Sonar Imagery also does not match the illustrations or in-depth geology of "The Geology of the United States' Seafloor: The View from Gloria" (J. Gardner, M. Field, and D. Twichell, Cambridge University Press, 1996). It is unfortunate that this latter book probably came out while the former was in production. Finally, there are no web addresses listed. This is an unfortunate oversight because there are many excellent web locations from which imagery can be downloaded.

All things considered, The Handbook of Seafloor Sonar Imagery is a good book for marine geologists who deal with deep-water settings and who want to better understand the tools used to image the deep seabed. This is not the final word on the subject, however, and a true "Seafloor Atlas" has yet to appear.

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