

## Mathematics and Democracy: The Case for Quantitative Literacy

Roxane Barrows, Hocking College

Roxane Barrows is Associate Dean of Arts & Sciences at Hocking College in Nelsonville, Ohio. She has been teaching mathematics for over 20 years. She obtained her BS in Business Administration from Ohio State University, MS in Mathematics at Ohio University, and is currently working on her dissertation in Higher Education Administration at Ohio University.

### Abstract

Mathematics and Democracy: The Case for Quantitative Literacy, edited by Lynn Arthur Steen, is a very timely book. Mathematics, mathematics education, and to a lesser degree, quantitative literacy have never been under as much scrutiny as they are today. Many mathematicians and non-mathematicians believe that too much attention has been placed on abstract mathematical concepts and not enough on numeracy. Steen, rightly so, believes that the majority of citizens need an understanding of quantitative literacy to succeed in life and the workplace, not abstract mathematics. To support his idea, he emphasizes that mathematics and numerical literacy are two different subjects and that being able to understand mathematics in the context in which it is being used is essential. The non-mathematical world is slowly coming to the realization that mathematics literacy is important and Steen does an excellent job of illustrating how fundamental quantitative literacy is for virtually everyone in our society regardless of occupation and/or economic status. He reminds the reader that quantitative data are everywhere in our society: (a) increases in gas prices, (b) changes in SAT scores, (c) low interest car loans, and (d) sports reporting (p. 1). Nearly everyone can relate to one or more of these examples, but many in our society do not know how to use the data for meaningful analysis, which is problematic. The first chapter sets the stage for the rest of the book; a collection of articles, by differing authors, about quantitative literacy.