

Review of *Fred Swainston's* **Radio Theory Handbook** Fourth Edition

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It would be easy to make this article very short: If you are a Foundation or Standard Call and you want to get more out of your hobby, buy this book, study it, take the examination and upgrade to more power, bands and modes!

However, I should probably flesh out the nature of the book and its suitability for the sometimes overwhelming task of upgrading or obtaining one of the two higher grades of licence in the new licensing structure.

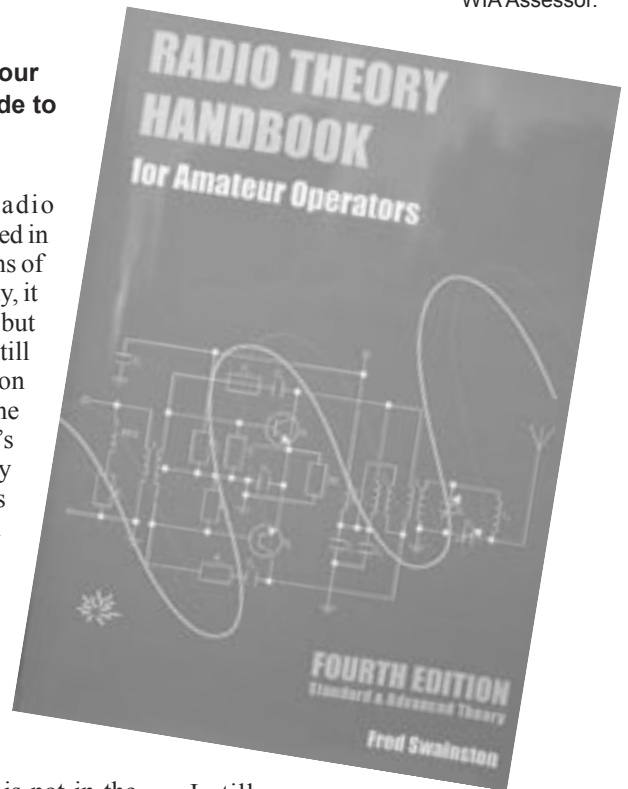
Perhaps I should acknowledge that a much earlier version of this book was instrumental in my success in the then AOCPE examination, so I was already positively predisposed towards the 'handbook' before the fourth edition arrived on my desk for review!

Those Foundation Licensees who have used the excellent text "The Foundation Licence Manual" produced by the WIA will instantly recognize that there are several fundamental differences between the two books:

The Foundation Manual is designed to provide basic radio information in an easy to understand manner that is appealing to people with little or no knowledge of Amateur Radio. It does this through modern presentation and the use of colour diagrams, photographs and simple, easy to understand text. The Swainston text has a different role to perform. It is required to detail the entire area of knowledge required to achieve the level of theory required for the much harder Standard and Advanced levels. To do this in the same manner as the Foundation Manual would require a voluminous work and is largely unnecessary, as the Swainston text doesn't require the same general audience appeal. Personally, I have written a smaller distance learning manual ('Plant Identification') for the University of Melbourne and can appreciate the time and effort required to create this sort of work on this scale.

Information in the Radio Theory Handbook is presented in chapters based on the sections of the ACMA Syllabus. Actually, it is based on the old syllabus but the vast majority of it is still relevant, and a comment on the text's jacket highlights the minimal extra information's presence. The required theory is assisted by simple drawings and diagrams to help with the reader's understanding. It does this very well, with little in the way of diversion or distraction. A short chapter on practical work is a good taster for homebrewing, a fundamental aspect of the "Ham radio" tradition that is not in the exam syllabus. Each chapter has a short test section that helps you review your study, and an appendix has two Standard and two Advanced theory papers.

Two new appendices cross reference the Advanced and Standard syllabi with the relevant sections of the book. This enables you to go through and highlight those sections that apply to the Standard Licence only. This is a little long winded and perhaps highlights the fact that the text is much easier to navigate and use if you are attempting the Advanced Licence. Personally, I found that studying for the old Novice level (the approximate equivalent of the new Standard Licence) was easier and less daunting from one of the now old, Novice licence texts that were once available at outlets around Australia and can still be found at hamfests.



I still have my copy of the Radio Theory Handbook and I have often found myself re-reading sections before trying to expand my knowledge via other texts or the internet. I find that while it is not a bedtime read, it helps to refresh your knowledge from the original source!

In short, I think that if you are thinking of attempting, particularly the Advanced Licence examination, you should buy this book, study it, take the examination and upgrade to more power, bands and modes! Good luck with your studies.

Note: Fred Swainston's Radio Theory Handbook Fourth Edition is published by ElecTrain. The book is available from the WIA Bookshop or orders can be placed via the publisher on phone (03) 9417 0700.