In order to get an impression of variationist sociolinguistics, *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change* is an excellent guide. The *Handbook* provides even a seasoned scholar with inspiration and expertise and constitutes, in short, a useful tool for anyone with an interest in sociolinguistics. In this review, I will first take a glance at the differences between the first and second editions, and then I will browse through the contents of the *Handbook*.

The first edition of the *Handbook* was published in 2002, so now – more than a decade later – is the right time to have it updated. Of the 29 chapters of the first edition, 19 are still included in the second edition, although revised and upgraded so profoundly that two of them have got new titles and three have gained an additional author. There are also seven entirely new chapters, and to keep the book manageable, ten of the original chapters of the first edition have been left out altogether. And yet, the second edition contains a total of 26 chapters and 616 pages and thereby is most adequate as a handbook for students, teachers, researchers and other scholars. There are, in total, thirty authors from six nations, all leading researchers in their fields, who give the reader a comprehensive and inspiring tour around the fascinating world of sociolinguistics.
The second edition contains a total of eight subject areas instead of the five of the first edition, each including three or four chapters (Part VIII constitutes an exception in containing only one chapter). The main difference between the editions is that the subdivision within the subject areas has been simplified. However, the division into individual topics has not changed much.

Part I, Data Collection, presents different perspectives on data collection: it contains chapters on fieldwork (by Crawford Feagin), data handling (by Tyler Kendall) and historical written documents (by Edgar W. Schneider). Part II, Evaluation, offers a short tour of some basic issues on working with the data through chapters on quantitative research (by Robert Bayley), sociophonetics (by Erik R. Thomas), comparative sociolinguistics (by Sali A. Tagliamonte) and folk linguistics (by Dennis R. Preston). These two parts which in the first edition were subsections of a part titled ‘Methodologies’ give a very nice overview to anyone contemplating initiating a sociolinguistic research project. For instance, in Chapter 2, ‘Data in the Study of Variation and Change’, Tyler Kendall explains in detail how decisions on processing data affect the results of the research project and possible further use of the data. This is very useful for students executing their first projects and considering their choices and decisions, and it may also serve as a checklist for more experienced researchers.

The third part of the present edition, titled ‘Linguistic Structure’, contains chapters on syntactic theory (by Ralph W. Fasold), chain shifts (by Matthew J. Gordon) and discourse variation (by Ronald Macaulay). To cite but one example, Chapter 8 by Ralph F. Fasold (‘Variation and Syntactic Theory’) lucidly presents the use of the Minimalist Program in variation analysis as well as the benefits and drawbacks of it with respect to other syntactic theories.

Parts IV–VI of the second edition originally constituted subsections of a part titled ‘Social Factors’. In the second edition, Part IV, Language and Time, includes four chapters presenting the methodologies of sociolinguistic research in real and apparent time (by Patricia Cukor-Avila and Guy Bailey), basic information on researching variation in child language (by Julie Roberts) and adolescent language (by Sam Kirkham and Emma Moore), and some patterns of variation and change (by J. K. Chambers). For instance, adolescence is an intriguing transition point between childhood and adulthood when, among other things, one’s idiolect becomes more stable. The extent of the adult language stability is debated, as Kirkham and Moore point out, but it is also shown that adolescents are the ones who, in a language change situation, feature the highest frequencies of the spreading variant. According to studies conducted among ethnic minority groups in the United Kingdom, adolescents indeed lead the change in some language contact situations. It is, nevertheless, useful to bear in mind that the group of
adolescents is heterogeneous. At least communities of practice, i.e., the construction of peer groups, should be taken into consideration when researching adolescent speech.

Part V, Social Differentiation, takes a glance at stylistic variation (by Natalie Schilling) and social factors such as class (by Sharon Ash), gender and sexuality (by Robin Queen) as well as ethnicity (by Carmen Fought). Part VI, Domains, deals with social networks (by Lesley Milroy and Carmen Llamas), communities of practice (by Miriam Meyerhoff and Anna Strycharz) and identity (by Scott F. Kiesling). All these topics are useful when pondering upon the reasons behind the results of a given study. A student definitely benefits from the thorough description of these factors and domains – but then again, so probably does a seasoned researcher.

In Part VII, Contact, the chapters discuss the conditions and results of linguistic encounters and collision in terms of diffusion and mobility (by David Britain), bilingualism (by Gillian Sankoff), koineization (by Paul Kerswill) and supralocalisation and dissociation (by Raymond Hickey). Many sorts of contact situations are covered and the reader is left with a thorough understanding of the possible outcomes of such events.

Finally, Part VIII, Sociolinguists and Their Communities, closes the Handbook with a chapter entitled ‘Community Commitment and Responsibility’ by Walt Wolfram. The chapter weighs different notions of community and different kinds of relationships between researchers and target communities. Wolfram elaborates on obligations and opportunities for researchers to give something back to the community that provided them the material to work with in the first place. He discusses various ways of presenting the information in an interesting manner, for example claiming results counterintuitive to common assumptions or tying linguistic information to cultural or social aspects, and he also encourages collaboration with people who are more used to targeting the public than the average researcher, for instance, journalists, designers or marketing specialists. These kinds of alliances can result in very accessible linguistic reporting.

As the editors state in their postscript, the Handbook familiarizes the reader with the possibilities and challenges of an entire research project from planning it to reporting its results and applying them. It is a vast and thorough description of the study of linguistic variation and change. The volume under review definitely constitutes a useful reference for any sociolinguist.