Abstract
Paul A. Samuelson is the founder of the modern introductory economics textbook. His textbook Economics has become a classic, and the yardstick of introductory economics textbooks. What is said to distinguish economics from the other social sciences is the development of a textbook tradition. The textbook presents the fundamental paradigms of the discipline, these gradually evolve over time as puzzles emerge, and solutions are found or suggested. The textbook is central to the dissemination of the principles of a discipline. Economics has, and does contribute to the education of students, and advances economic literacy and understanding in society. It provided a common economic language for students. Systematic analysis and research into introductory textbooks is relatively recent. The contribution that textbooks play in portraying a discipline and its evolution has been undervalued and under-researched. Specifically, applying bibliographical and textual analysis to textbook writing in economics, examining a single introductory economics textbook and its successive editions through time is new. When it is considered that an economics textbook is more than a disseminator of information, but a physical object with specific content, presented in a particular way, it changes the way a researcher looks at that textbook. This thesis examines the sixteen editions of Economics as a physical object, and its content. Through this examination it is possible to see how Samuelson made economics accessible to students. A central question is has Economics evolved as the world around it has changed? Samuelson has a very student-oriented approach when writing his textbook. Readers of Economics come to understand economic concepts through relevant examples. Well-known people and events are used by Samuelson to illustrate economic theory and present economic ideas. In Economics Samuelson presents the principles of mainstream economics. He also portrays the social, psychological, political, and historical landscape of the time. Samuelson's Economics provides the non-professional economist (the student, businessperson, politician etc) with the principles of economics, presented in ways that are relevant to them, and relate to the issues they see and face in the world. Economics has not remained static; rather, it has developed over time. The ability of Economics to evolve has been the key to its survival.