
Efforts to make bibliography a more effective tool of scholarship, as a part of a broad and continuing study of the history of ideas and their transmission through books, have always had a prominent place. However during the past quarter-century a great deal of serious thought has been given to general principles of bibliographical theory, policy, and method. The acknowledged turning point for this increased emphasis was the appearance in 1949 of Fredson Bowers' Principles of Bibliographical Description and Curt F. Buhler, James G. McManaway, and Lawrence C. Wroth's Standards of Bibliographical Description.

This collection of fourteen essays is meant to update and consolidate much of the work done in descriptive bibliography since the publication of the Bowers volume. It is an anthology conceived as a "selective supplement," a handy compendium of post-Principles theories, techniques, and application intended for (1) practicing bibliographers, (2) graduate students of literature, and (3) collectors, dealers, historians of printing, and librarians who may not now have ready access to the issues of the journals in which these essays originally appeared.

The scope of this collection is broad in both content and objective. The articles are arranged in two groups. First, those of a general nature which touch on all periods of bibliographical study. Second, those with a more specific orientation, arranged chronologically from incunabula to the present century according to the modes of book production to which they apply.

The first section begins with Bowers argument for bibliography as a scholarly discipline. Included are two essays by G. Thomas Tanselle (1) on tolerance and accuracy in bibliographical description and (2) a very technical proposal for the description of paper, plus an overview of music bibliography by Cecil Hopkinson.

The second section begins with two short pieces on incunabula by Curt F. Buhler. These are followed by Allan Stevenson's detective story of the application of beta-radiography to the study of watermarks (a technique pioneered in Leningrad by D. P. Erastov) to date undated books. An analysis of half-sheet imposition by Kenneth Povey is followed by David Foxon's discussion of printing at one pull and determining imposition by point-holes. Then comes William B. Todd's study of descriptive techniques coupled with book reviews in the eighteenth century, plus Tanselle's survey of techniques for recording press figures. The nineteenth century is represented by Oliver L. Steele's account of imposition sheets in machine-printed books. The concluding essays concern problems of description by duplicate sets of plates (Matthew J. Brucoli) and the redefinition of "issue" by distinguishing the printing history from the publishing history of a book by James B. Meriwether and Joseph Katz.

Never far away from the reading and writing of essays such as these is the debate of old versus new, the traditionalist as opposed to the modernist. The best bibliographer, after all, is "the simple scholar (armed only with spectacles
to provide 20/20 vision) who examines books without the benefit of machines, but with knowledge and judgment." Practitioners of the "new" bibliography are frequently guilty of comma-catching, and perhaps too often find themselves talking to each other instead of seeking out a wider audience. Or, in the elegant words of the late John Carter in his presidential address to the Bibliographical Society in 1969, "Shall we prefer the tiger to the tabby cat." Any compromise position this side of schizophrenia is an individual matter. Depending upon one's point of view toward the Hinman Collator, among many other things, this volume can provide elucidation as well as information.

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This book is a critical guide to Canadian history, government, and politics since 1867. It is indispensable. It should be on the desk of every person who reads Canadian history and on many of those who don't but would like to. It is available at a price that makes it easily accessible, and the truth is we have no other book quite like it, in range or quality, Claude Thibault's Bibliographia Canadiana (1973) is large, cumbersome, and devoid of critical comment; Beaulieu's Guide d'histoire du Canada (1969) is uncritical and not very comprehensive. The comments in this book of Granatstein and Stevens are usually sensible, and they make up in frankness what they occasionally lack in judiciousness. Candour is the purpose, and it is refreshing to find occasionally even waspish utterances. There is, it is true, a certain tendency to prefer interpretative pyrotechnics to narrative accounts, but this is a defect of virtues.

It is to be hoped that future editions may allow a few corrections. For example strong though this book is in reporting work in the social sciences, it is thin on the side of literature and the humanities. It is a nice question whether literature is part of history or not, but they certainly inform each other. The section on French Canada does mention Pierre de Grandpré's 4-volume Histoire de la littérature française de Québec (1967-1970), but fails to mention Gerard Tougis' Histoire de la littérature canadienne-française (1967), in one volume, and thus more useful to English-speaking readers. Carl Klinck's justly famous Literary History of Canada (1965) is mentioned only once, and that briefly, in the essay on Atlantic Canada. One of the best books on the history of the West is a work of literature, Wallace Stegner's Wolf Willow (1962). Perhaps that is the reason it is missing. It is however part of a slight weakness in the western section. Hugh Dempsey's wonderful biography of Crowfoot (1972) is missing, and so is Paul Sharp's evocation of Alberta in the 1860's and 1870's, Whoop-Up Country (1966). James Gray's chef d'oeuvre, The Boy from Winnipeg (1970) is not there either, though his other books are.

Reminiscences, generally, fare rather badly. Cartwright's thundering diatribe against Sir John A. Macdonald in his Reminiscences (1912) is not there. Missing