*The Book Trade in Canada**Paper Phoenix: A History of Book Publishing in English Canada.*

[By] Delores Broten and Peter Birdsall. Victoria: CANLIT, 1980.

84 p., paper, \$8.00 ISBN 0-920566-08-1

Studies in the Book Trade. [By] Delores Broten and Peter Birdsall.

Victoria: CANLIT, 1980. 30 p., paper, \$4.00 ISBN 0-920566-10-3

I have mixed feelings about these works because I am not certain how they will satisfy their intended audience — ‘professionals in all areas of the book trade’. The authors run CANLIT, a small ‘non-profit research co-operative, founded in 1973 to investigate all aspects of Canadian literature, publishing and culture’ and first came to notice with *The Lumber Jack Report* (1975). They hope that their analyses, digests, and probes in a series of monographs and occasional *mini-reports* (1978-) will help promote an independent and healthy publishing industry.

These good intentions, however, even though backed up by a great deal of research and documentation, have been executed at the sacrifice of attractiveness and to some extent reliability. Here we have one of the results of operating on a shoestring budget: stapled, paper-covered pamphlets of questionable durability, the texts of which are reproduced from a cramped single-spaced typescript. It is like reading a first draft, especially when you find the sources in square brackets worked into the paragraphs of the text itself. The authors’ desire for convenience and their enthusiasm is very commendable, but the appearance of haste is disturbing.

Few, if any, recent surveys have attempted to cover as much ground as *Paper Phoenix*, which is organized as a compendium or a mosaic of episodes, examples, and statistics, rather than as a coherent narrative of patterns and strands. The first half contains historical perspectives on the ‘elements’ of the book trade (authorship, libraries, distribution, etc.), while the last half consists of ‘probes’ into contemporary copyright, agencies, and corporate takeovers. Its reliability is in part undermined by spelling errors and poor proofreading (e.g., G. Adam Mercer for G. Mercer Adam) and by inaccuracies which exist in some of their sources; its readability is sometimes affected by a surfeit of statistics and awkward transitions.

Although many sources are included in *Paper Phoenix*, *Studies in the Book Trade* is the annotated ‘companion bibliography’ consisting of 114 items used for *Paper Phoenix*. Most of them are government surveys and reports, conference papers, and briefs which have appeared in the past fifteen years; but thousands of items in trade and business journals, past and present, were deliberately excluded, as well as manuscripts, Quebec bookselling, and categories like copyright. The bibliography does not pretend to be exhaustive, and at best it is a starting point for a student needing sources on the economics of contemporary book publishing. The format for the entries, while clear enough, is plagued with inconsistencies.

CANLIT’s urgency in getting its materials before the public is part of its commitment to a thriving national culture. In a positive sense the authors’ probes demonstrate how badly we need a painstakingly thorough and comprehensive study.

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