true that funding agencies may look askance at providing grants for bibliographical projects which give every appearance of duplicating existing compilations. Surely these agencies must be educated to the developing exigencies of bibliographical studies so that they do not block any bibliographical publication until it can satisfy every demand for perfection. If that were the case then the state of Canadian bibliography would be grim indeed.

How, then, is ABCMA being received? Joyce Wayne’s article, cited earlier in this review, indicates that sales figures have been encouraging to the extent that two thousand copies of Vol. 3 were printed for ECW Press. For a bibliography, especially for a Canadian bibliography, this is an exceptionally large print run. Recognition of ABCMA, in the form of reviews of individual volumes as they appear, has been generally favourable if low key. An instance of this muted reaction is provided by two papers presented at the recent conference, Bibliography for Canadian Studies: Present Trends and Future Needs, held in Halifax [the papers delivered at this conference were published as an entire volume of Canadian Issues 4 [1982]]. Lillian M. Rider, in her ‘Summary of Developments in Canadian Subject and Area Bibliography Since 1974,’ indicated the indispensability of ABCMA as a source of ‘quick access to criticisms and reviews’ [p. 111] without otherwise commenting on the uniqueness of the coverage provided by the separate bibliographies. Veronica Strong-Boag, in the context of her paper ‘The Fugitive Female: An Introduction to the Bibliography of Canadian Women’s Studies,’ referred to ABCMA as ‘a newcomer of promise’ but felt that it ‘should be used in conjunction with the older guides’ [p. 55].

A proper assessment of ABCMA may have to await the completion of the full series when its critical role in the spectrum of Canadian literary bibliography may be more objectively viewed, not only in terms of existing work but also in terms of such proposed resources as the Association for Canadian and Quebec Literatures’ ‘Bibliography of English Canadian Literature’ [which seems, more recently, to have been ‘lost’ for lack of a coordinator], and the to-be-hoped-for descriptive bibliographies recommended by Landon in 1974. In the meantime, ABCMA is making a useful and possibly even an invaluable contribution to the bibliographical record of Canadian literature. It is not only a worthy successor to Watters’ pioneering efforts but quite clearly – in terms of its élan and scope – the most important bibliographical publication for English Canadian literature in the last decade.

PETER GREIG

(Peter Greig is Head of the Collections Development Section of the Department of National Defence National Headquarters Library in Ottawa.)


A companion volume to R.G. Moyles’ English-Canadian Literature to 1900: A Guide to Information Sources [Gale, 1976], Helen Hoy’s guide is a checklist of works published to 1981 by and about twentieth-century Canadian authors of fiction and non-fiction prose. Most of the seventy-eight individual bibliographies are concerned with
novelists and short story writers, although several writers of nonfiction prose in related literary genres – essayists, literary critics, nature writers, biographers, memoirists, and humourists – are also included.

The first two sections of this guide contain more than 580 of the most significant works written about Canadian literature; they provide a useful backdrop to the individual bibliographies. Section one lists bibliographies and general reference sources, as well as biographical references and indexes to serials, anthologies, collections, and theses. Several guides to manuscripts and special collections are also listed. The second section includes books and articles of literary history, criticism, and theory.

Bibliographies of fiction prose writers are arranged alphabetically in a section before those for nonfiction prose writers. Each begins with a brief biographical note and is then divided into two major parts: primary and secondary material. The primary material listings include monographs and book-length works, short works, and manuscripts. Secondary material listings include other bibliographies, criticism, and book reviews. With a total of more than 5200 individual entries, the work is completed by Author, Title, and Subject Indexes.

Modern English-Canadian Prose: A Guide to Information Sources is a well-planned quick reference tool containing a wealth of information. It should prove to be helpful to both laymen and scholars of Canadian literature. Although necessarily selective in both the choice of writers and works listed, it succeeds in including the major modern Canadian novelists, short story writers, and nonfiction prose writers. Of course any selection of this kind is bound to be subjective and controversial. In her introduction Hoy lists an additional thirty writers who would have been included in any complete work but who have been excluded here. One could argue that it is precisely these ‘minor’ writers who should have been included because their work is not well-documented in other bibliographies. The works of some of Canada’s major writers have already been listed elsewhere in much more detail; Robert Lecker and Jack David’s The Annotated Bibliography of Canada’s Major Authors (ECW Press, 1979–) comes to mind. In any case, Hoy’s work does provide a great service in including bibliographies for a selection of minor figures as well as for popular writers, such as Pierre Berton and Farley Mowat, who have not yet been the subjects of detailed bibliographical studies.

Hoy’s work is commendable for its relative completeness, its sensible organization, its sufficient level of bibliographic detail and its timeliness. There is one major complaint and this lies in the errors which appear to have crept into the work during its production. These are of four types: inaccurate or misleading biographical sketches, typographical errors, inaccurate numeration of entries, and deletion of entries. For example, at least six of the biographical sketches contain errors. We are told that Earle Birney served in the Canadian army in ‘World War 1,’ that Marian Engel worked in ‘Nicosia, Cyprus,’ and that Timothy Findley is the author of ‘The War.’ These may be explained as typographical errors. More odd is this statement about Howard O’Hagan: ‘for the past several decades he has been living on Vancouver Island.’ This would be acceptable if Mr. O’Hagan were still alive, and yet the year of his death is included in the sketch. Similar lack of coordination is found in the bibliographies of John Glassco and Marshall McLuhan. Additional typographical errors are
present throughout the work; in entry 3354, for example, we are confronted by 'The Luck of Giner Coffey.' Inaccuracies in numeration include item 3086 being misnumbered 3087 and no entry numbered 4254. In at least four instances completely separate works have been given duplicate numbers with an additional small case 'a': 190 and 190a, 3344 and 3344a, 4516 and 4516a, 4528 and 4528a. Were these entries squeezed in at the last moment? Each should have been given a distinct number. Finally, the presence of at least ten entries which read 'entry deleted' is unfortunate: entry 476, 615, 1785, 1802, 1807, 1820, 3417, 4136, 4446, and 4466. Why were these left in at all? Surely bibliographic entries which are arranged with the aid of a computer can be renumbered easily enough? These oddities and inaccuracies are irritating and only act to undermine the value of this work as a reliable reference tool. It is unfortunate that more time and care were not taken to conduct a thorough proofreading of the work before it was released.

DONALD W. MCLEOD

(Donald W. McLeod is a freelance librarian and researcher living in Toronto.)


This bibliography is the second volume of a projected five volume microfiche catalogue aimed ultimately at forming a comprehensive database for a computerized bibliography of Canadian literature. This is a very ambitious and important project, the significance of which has not yet been widely realized. It is, of course, inevitable that such a database will eventually be created; the presence of Mr. Miska's work as first in the field may well mean that his five bibliographies will in fact form its foundation. Therefore an evaluation of the comprehensiveness of this volume (an evaluation which may be read together with Beth Miller's review of Vol. 1 in the Papers 19 [1980]: 118-119) must consider the far-reaching consequences which the project has as its goal.

I will not address the five-part overall categorization of the project, which presumably would disappear in a cumulative database, or at least become less cumbersome with quick computerized cross-referencing. Volume 2 is restricted to fiction (the novel and the short story) and critical works on these genres in general, or on works and authors specifically. It therefore concentrates on critical books and articles and, as such, is a fine collection – the result, I'm sure, of much raking over of obscure serials as well as existing bibliographies. In particular, Section iv, 'Individual Authors,' is a conventional compilation of articles that seems impressively comprehensive and which I certainly am glad to have. Altogether in 292 pages Miska has arranged 3,360 entries culled from serials as varied as the Canadian Indian Times and the old Weekend Magazine. Only a few of these entries seem out of place [no. 193, Taine's History of English Literature, which does not even mention Canada, is surely a joke], and I am surprised to see some that I had thought were almost unknown. It is not complete, but considering its scope I am not going to fault it too severely for its omissions, especially as it does contain the more important articles that I pursued in an investigation.