
As the authors say in the Introduction, less than a century ago an almanac was as standard a part of the furniture of the European mind as the Bible. Almost every home had one and they were, therefore, the mainstay of many a publishing house. Although the calendar was the essential base of the almanac, other materials it contained varied enormously and often controversially in a young country where the government controlled what appeared in the press.

Australian almanacs had an important role in the transmission of utilitarian information across the vast new territory and included commercial and residential information of use these days to genealogical research. But there were from the early years also specialised almanacs – for sailors, women, gardeners, farmers, tailors, and gold diggers. Print runs were sometimes in the dozens rather than the hundreds and yet surprisingly many survive in Australian archives. As the authors say, that they survive at all is amazing. How many of us today, for example, keep old telephone directories and calendars?

The bibliography is arranged geographically, and within those divisions chronologically. The final section is almanacs with Australian content published overseas. In practice this means the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and aimed chiefly at emigrants and immigrants. There are some very rudimentary maps and nice black and white illustrations as well as a lovely, coloured frontispiece.

This is an expensive little book but well produced and thoroughly scholarly, a model of its kind.


The annual lecture at the Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Books once again comes the way of the *Papers of the Bibliographical*