

## Book Reviews

*Iowa History and Culture: A Bibliography of Materials Published Between 1952 and 1986*, compiled by Patricia Dawson and David Hudson. Ames: State Historical Society of Iowa in association with Iowa State University Press, 1989. xiii, 356 pp. Name index, subject index. \$34.95 cloth.

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The irony of progress sometimes moves backwards in time. The late Walter Rundell, Jr., alluded to this phenomenon in 1971 when he wrote his stinging analysis of the State Historical Society of Iowa and its contemporary leadership. He strongly suggested that the society should revamp its publication program, that its existing collections should be brought under control, and that new finding aids should be compiled to locate historical sources. Dr. Rundell felt that proper attention was long overdue to the issue of a historical bibliography of Iowa. His timely and constructive criticism challenged many amateur and professional historians to consider new ways to effectively document Iowa's historical productivity.

Professional librarians Patricia Dawson and David Hudson were among the first to hear Rundell's clarion call and to take up its enormous challenge. Both knew well that trying to help library patrons find unindexed, historical materials about Iowa was often a futile, seemingly hopeless exercise. But by knowing the need to have a cumulative record of Iowa's historical accounts, they obtained the endorsement from the State Historical Society of Iowa to bring such a bibliography into print. Together they took more than ten years to survey all major and regional journals, books, unpublished dissertations, and theses.

The comprehensive subject arrangement of this bibliography includes general, regional, and local histories of Iowa, biography and autobiography, agriculture, architecture and historic buildings, arts and literature, communal societies, communication, economic and business history, education, government and politics, immigration and ethnic groups, Indians, law and crime, medicine and health care, population studies, recreation and sports, religion, the sciences, social conditions and problems, social life and customs, transportation, wartime and military life, and women. Each subject subdivides into smaller categories, arranged alphabetically or chronologically.

Each entry includes a standard citation and, if the title alone does not adequately describe the nature of the work, a brief, explanatory annotation.

Some topical categories are deliberately excluded. Genealogy now ranks as the world's foremost hobby, but family histories as a historical genre are omitted—mainly because there are so many. Some genealogical accounts do appear, however, in county, town, church, and associational histories, and in the biographies. Peter H. Curtis's compilation, *Fire Insurance Maps of Iowa Cities and Towns: A List of Holdings* (1983), is a good example. This work reveals many commercial property holders by name, and its value as a genealogical tool greatly extends its resource value. Due to relative quantity and accessibility, newspaper articles pertinent to local and state history are also excluded. Since librarians at Iowa State University index several newspapers, including the *Des Moines Register*, further indexing of Iowa's historical news is redundant. Manuscripts are also excluded, except dissertations and theses, which can be borrowed from lending libraries or purchased in microform from University Microfilms International. Nonprint materials like audiovisuals are likewise discounted because various agencies already provide catalogs to holdings of these types.

Several features reveal the compilers' creative abilities to anticipate the kinds of information that library patrons will likely need. Many citations have chapter analytics for the contents of the books and articles that contain different subjects. Additionally, the chapter topics from state histories *other* than Iowa—many included because they deal specifically with local areas near Iowa's boundary—often possess rich historical accounts about border activities in Iowa's cities and towns.

An extensive subject index helps users locate the numbered citations, and displays an extraordinarily complex network of information analysis. Cross-references from one subject entry to another provide accommodating directions to the user, for example, Printing and publishing . . . *See also* Newspapers and journalism. A few cross-references, however, are needed to inform the reader of other names by which an entry is known, for example, Masons . . . *See* Freemasons. The subject index also possesses a large number of place names, and the index user can immediately see what topics apply to these geographical locations. The personal name index includes persons as subjects and as authors, editors, and compilers of works cited in the bibliography. If two or more joint authors are responsible for an entered work, the names of each author are listed in the index with the appropriate finding number.

This bibliography generates another kind of use because of its remarkable thoroughness. The compilers have personally inspected almost every item listed to verify the bibliographic accuracy of the citation, and they have standardized all of the citations. Using these standardized listings, library users wishing to borrow a title through an interlibrary-loan arrangement can use the computerized storage facilities of the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) to identify the libraries throughout the United States that own the needed material.

Compilers Dawson and Hudson hope to assemble future supplements or a cumulative update. Lacunae brought to their attention before that time will undoubtedly fill those categories already outlined in the current edition. But the compilers state their wish in the introduction to limit the scope of the bibliography to make it as widely useful as possible. If a future supplement or cumulative edition is someday assembled, it might then be advisable to describe, in a section devoted to computer searching of historical citations, how some commercial database searches could supplement *Iowa History and Culture*. Topics such as "Literary history and language," "Historical fiction," or "Poetry," for example, could just as well be more exhaustively searched in such commercial databases as *America: History and Life* or the *Modern Language Association Bibliography*.

The collection of citations in *Iowa History and Culture* proves that Iowa's historical literature has increased exponentially during the thirty-seven years since William Petersen compiled the *Iowa History Reference Guide* in 1952. Both indexes reveal how books and articles about Iowa's history have proliferated. This book is designed so that librarians and historians will find it an important tool, and anyone searching for historical data will locate a wealth of information. Much credit goes to the State Historical Society of Iowa and the Iowa State University Press for an outstanding product. With pleasing page appearance in layout and type design, printed on acid-free paper, it is a major contribution to the dissemination of information about Iowa's cultural heritage. In addition, it may serve as a major contribution to historical bibliography of Iowa in particular and to its twentieth-century scholarship in general.

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