

Éventuellement, les auteurs de ces études pourraient puiser, pour leur bibliographie, dans des sources documentaires provenant d'entreprises d'envergure, telles que l'ALCAN, la Shawinigan Water and Power Company ou la Montreal Light, Heat and Power Corporation. Entre autres, les rapports annuels et les registres de paie de ces sociétés pourraient receler des informations inédites sur le type de formation et de compétences de leurs effectifs francophones.

En général, le texte de l'ouvrage est clair, accessible et, à l'occasion, savoureusement anecdotique. Il présente toutefois certains anachronismes : ainsi, la science historique s'avère sensiblement télescopée lorsque l'auteur parle de l'État québécois entre 1905 et 1936 (p. 178). À l'époque, en effet, cette « appellation contrôlée » pour désigner la province de Québec n'existait encore que sous la forme d'un « corps en esprit ».

**Kenneth L. Ames and Gerald W. R. Ward, eds.,
*Decorative Arts and Household Furnishings in America,
1650–1920: An Annotated Bibliography***

SCOTT ROBSON

Kenneth L. Ames and Gerald W. R. Ward, editors. *Decorative Arts and Household Furnishings in America, 1650–1920: An Annotated Bibliography*. Winterthur, Delaware: The Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1989. Distributed by The University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia. 392 pp. Cloth US\$60, ISBN 0-912724-19-6.

Here is an entire library at your disposal, in a single volume, a library of the best books on a wide range of subjects related to the study of material culture in America, a library to serve specialists related to the study of material culture in America, a library to serve specialists or generalists in a good portion of the museum community, in large or small institutions. It should also reach a wider public through the reference services of general interest libraries.

Twenty-two experts have read thousands of books and articles to select those presented here – there must be over 1300 titles. This is the museum curator's "wish-list." Each contributor could have written, "If you can get only x-number of books on this subject, these are the ones I have found most useful." While it is of course an imaginary library (in that none of our libraries will contain all the titles), it is also almost a reality. Supplied with title, author's name and other details (and a very good idea of the content), an enquirer can gain access

to any work – if a book cannot be bought, it could be borrowed.

When I visit a new city, I like to explore the systems and holdings of major libraries, usually by checking a familiar subject. Readers of this book will surely do the same, beginning with known titles, finding some not previously encountered, and moving on to related fields.

In this book, this "library," you may begin by reading the summary of a familiar work, to judge whether the annotation captures the important aspects of the text in a few sentences. Once drawn in, you may find it hard to stop. It is the annotations for every title which make this such a useful tool. Although commentaries are written in rather detached professional style, the contributor of each essay and book list is there to take you by the arm and walk with you, to point out major landmarks and important mileposts (and to indicate some pitfalls) among their favourite books. This is rather like the luxury of viewing an exhibition with its curator, a treat of working in the museum field that I treasure. The enthusiasm of discovery, observation, comparison, research, evaluation and presentation is infectious and energizing. You may view the exhibition or books by yourself, of course, but you also have the benefit of untold hours of work by a dedicated researcher/reader.

This bibliography follows on *The Arts*

in *Early American History* by Walter Muir Whitehill, Wendell D. Garrett and Jane N. Garrett, published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, at Williamsburg, Virginia (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), *Arts in America*, edited by Bernard Karpel (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979), and others.

The essay by Kenneth L. Ames is not only an introduction to the whole project and to the chapters by the contributors, but also to the state of publishing in the field of material culture, with his observations on changes in scholarship in recent years. Some fields have grown rapidly while others have not seen benefit of renewed interest, study and reconsideration. The editor explains the intent of the project, in part:

This bibliography provides access and orientation to the study of household furnishings used in the United States from the seventeenth century to the early twentieth century. It is designed for use by the general public, collectors, college and university students at both the undergraduate and the graduate levels, the scholarly community, and librarians and other staff at a variety of cultural institutions. Users will find this volume simultaneously records the most prominent scholarship on historic household furnishings and offers opportunities for critical reflection on that scholarship ... This is essentially a bibliography of the material culture of domestic life. The emphasis is on goods used within American homes.

Ames then describes the limitations that were necessary in order to make the project manageable. In any such effort, it would not be possible to include all topics. For instance, titles relating to the fine arts or to native peoples are well documented elsewhere. While a familiar book or special subject may not appear, there is certainly more than adequate compensation.

Each of the 21 chapters is introduced by a short essay which analyses the entries and places them in various contexts, a very readable preparation to the field of study. Many contributors are curators, assistant curators, or registrars at major museums; others are university professors; a few are independent scholars with experience in a special subject area. Some are also authors of major works themselves, so their introductory comments were developed from extensive experience indeed.

The chapters are arranged, as is most writing in the field, by material or by function:

References and Surveys

"Basic References and Guides to Research," Neville Thompson

"Surveys," Kenneth L. Ames and Barbara G. Carson

Architecture

"Domestic Architecture," David Schuyler

Furniture

"American Furniture to 1820," Barbara McLean Ward and Gerald W. R. Ward

"American Furniture, 1820-1920," Kenneth L. Ames

Metals

"American Silver and Gold," Barbara McLean Ward and Gerald W. R. Ward

"Pewter and Britannia Metal," Barbara McLean Ward

"Brass, Copper, Iron, and Tin," Deborah A. Federhen

Ceramics and Glass

"American Ceramics," Ellen Paul Denker

"Continental and Oriental Ceramics in America," Ellen Paul Denker

"English Ceramics in America," George L. Miller and Ann Smart Martin

"American Glass," Kirk Nelson

Textiles

"Floor Coverings," Rodris Roth

"Needlework," Susan Burrows Swan

"Quilts," Susan Roach-Lankford

"Textiles," Adrienne D. Hood

Timepieces

"Clocks and Watches," Thomas S. Michie

Household Activities and Systems

"Kitchen Artifacts and Housework," Donna R. Braden

"Plumbing, Heating, and Lighting," Ulysses Grant Dietz

Artisans and Culture

"Craftsmen," Edward S. Cooke, Jr.

"The Arts and Crafts Movement in America," Cheryl A. Robertson, with contributions by Thomas Beckman and Robert L. Edwards

These chapters present not only the latest published scholarship, but also the older foundation stones for our "library." Even such a fine bibliography will inevitably drop behind the times, but with the titles of so many standard reference works (some "the bible" on the subject), this book should serve for many years. It should also guide us to improve our own libraries, whether specialized or general.

You may find a few slightly inaccurate titles or dates. With such an ambitious project, such slips are almost assured. It may also be that editions we see here in Canada are different from

those listed. Ames points out that "references to Canadian and Mexican materials are deliberately limited." Even so, some excellent Canadian material is listed along with the best in the American field; some of my favourite titles do appear.

There is an index to all titles and authors of works listed. Unfortunately there is no index by subject keywords (a massive undertaking since many works deal with a magnitude of subjects and terms), but as the chapters are divided along general subject areas, material can be located in the most likely place; in some cases, a title appears in more than one section.

As a museum generalist, I welcome this compilation by specialists. We often naturally, and appropriately, turn to the United States for

this sort of information. It cannot be called a shortcoming of this bibliography that Canadian titles are limited, or that British or French titles do not appear. Given such a wealth of American resource material, we should now be pressed to examine our own resources more, promoting the published research on Canadian subjects to the Canadian museum community. We could benefit from a parallel listing of Canadian titles, slight though that might be in many subject areas. However, any researcher here would be well advised to begin with a chapter of this bibliography, then to search for what is available in the Canadian field, the British, and (especially for eighteenth-century work) the French.

Graeme Patterson,
History and Communications:
Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, the Interpretation of History

BRYAN DEWALT

Patterson, Graeme. *History and Communications: Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, the Interpretation of History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990. 251 pp. Cloth \$40.00, ISBN 0-8020-2764-4. Paper \$16.95, ISBN 0-8020-6810-3.

Like many researchers in the field of the history of technology, I do not know enough about Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan's work on communications. Despite the lip service paid to Innis as the father of staples theory and despite the fleeting fame of McLuhan, the work of neither man has proven amenable to conventional analysis. The reader will search their sweeping passages in vain for a clear statement of theme, the coherent presentation of evidence, and the integration of both into narrative or dialectic. This very opacity of Innis and McLuhan's work has been both their main appeal and their primary liability; just as they attract so they repel. Many of us might well turn then, to Graeme Patterson's curious book in the hope of finding the lucidity and coherence lacking in the originals. If they are looking for such a primer, however, they will be disappointed.

History and Communications: Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, the Interpretation of History is not a beginner's guide to the work of these two men. The book is rather a collection of interrelated essays aimed at placing Innis and McLuhan within the context of evolving historical thought in Canada and therefore also demonstrating their relevance to the study of Canadian history, particularly intellectual history.

Patterson begins with Innis, arguing that his later work on communications was not a radical departure from his early books on the fur trade and the cod fishery. They were in fact linked by a common concern for transportation systems as the means for the movement of physical things, be they "made beaver" or papyrus scrolls. These systems and the products they carried had formative influences on societies and empires and thus were, in a McLuhanesque sense, media of communications. Furthermore, Innis's early and late work were both written in the context of historiographical concern for Canada as a part of the British Empire and as the centre of a new (commercial) empire itself.