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Title

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Abstract Review of *A Comprehensive Annotated Book of Mormon Bibliography* (1996), and *A Guide to Publications on the Book of Mormon: A Selected Annotated Bibliography* (1996), edited by Donald W. Parry, Jeanette W. Miller, and Sandra A. Thorne.

Donald W. Parry, Jeanette W. Miller, and Sandra A. Thorne, eds. *A Comprehensive Annotated Book of Mormon Bibliography*. Provo, Utah: Research Press, 1996. vii + 643 pp., with appendixes and subject index. \$99.95 (includes an electronic version on diskette).

Donald W. Parry, Jeanette W. Miller, and Sandra A. Thorne, eds. *A Guide to Publications on the Book of Mormon: A Selected Annotated Bibliography*. Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1996. vii + 403 pp., with appendixes and subject index. \$19.95.

Reviewed by Richard D. Van Orden

These two annotated bibliographies, differing in comprehensiveness, intended readership, and binding, fill an important need in guiding students, teachers, and scholars of the Book of Mormon to related holdings of libraries with significant collections of Mormon materials in the United States and England. Among the universities whose library collections were consulted are Brigham Young University, Harvard University, UCLA, the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Utah, Utah State University, Weber State University, and Yale University. Materials in the Manchester and Sheffield libraries in England, the New York Public Library, the LDS Church Office Library, and others also were consulted. In an exhaustive search for published writings on the Book of Mormon, the editors checked published bibliographies and computer databases. In some periodicals such as the *Saints Herald* and *Millennial Star*, which lacked adequate indexes, the editors searched through each volume page by page looking for articles on the Book of Mormon.

Books, articles, reviews, pamphlets, some creative pieces such as plays and poetry, substantive newspaper articles, and selected theses and dissertations constitute the types of information

included in *A Comprehensive Annotated Book of Mormon Bibliography*, which is printed on high-quality paper and hardbound with library-quality sewn binding. The complete listing of the more than 6,300 items examined by the team of annotators is contained in this larger volume.

A Guide to Publications on the Book of Mormon: A Selected Annotated Bibliography, a high-quality softbound book, includes the same bibliographic and annotated information for 3,200 items selected from the longer list. The selection of this subset was based on identifying those works of most use to students of the scriptures. As noted in a 1996 article introducing the books, "The chief categories that are not included in this selected bibliography are anti-Mormon literature, materials outdated by more recent studies, and less-substantive materials, such as pamphlets and news articles."¹

The signed annotations, which vary from some 30 to 200 words, average less than 100 words in length and are descriptive, but not evaluative. The citations give the title, author, and publication information. Because the annotations do not indicate which library holds the material, the reader is unable to go from the citation directly to the source from which it might be obtained. However, most libraries provide access to national databases that include library holdings and facilitate interlibrary loan of the desired material if it is not available locally.

Despite necessary brevity, the descriptions give the reader an idea of the focus and contents of the items. Initials at the end of each annotation link its author with the "Key to Annotation Authors" found in the introduction (p. vii). Thirty-six annotators examined the physical items involved in this massive bibliographic endeavor. Notable writers and others volunteered their expertise to this singularly important compilation of writings on the Book of Mormon. Among the voluminous descriptions prepared in a five-year endeavor are numerous nuggets.

For example, citation B.552 on page 70 of *A Comprehensive Annotated Book of Mormon Bibliography* reflects the alphanumeric ordering system used in both volumes. Concerning a

¹ "Five Years and Countless Hours Produce Two FARMS Bibliographies on the Book of Mormon," *Insights: An Ancient Window* (June 1996): 5.

1961 pamphlet, this annotation describes it as "a polemical work that sets forth claims against Mormonism and its doctrines." (Polemics is one of the five categories of materials which are a part of this large bibliography, whose goal was to produce a comprehensive, annotated listing of published items on the Book of Mormon. In addition to polemics, categories include religion, fiction, book reviews, and general studies dealing with history, literature, linguistics, and other scholarly disciplines [see p. vi].) After delineating the author's rationale for questioning the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, the annotator's final statement reads: "The testimony of the Book of Mormon witnesses is also dismissed as worthless." In this carefully worded description, which is representative of most of the annotations, the reader gets a good idea of whether or not this pamphlet published in London contributes to understanding a particular concept.

Online bibliographic searching adds the helpful information that this 1961 work is 15 pages long and is part of the series "Modern Heresies." An interlibrary loan request on an international database indicates that it is available from the Cleveland Public Library and other institutions. Not surprisingly, this pamphlet is not listed in *A Guide to Publications on the Book of Mormon: A Selected Annotated Bibliography*, the shorter list of useful titles.

Although pagination is given when an article is part of a larger work, the number of pages is not given for books and pamphlets. The decision not to include page length eliminates valuable information that might be a useful indicator for the individual to determine from the annotation alone the advisability of obtaining a particular book or pamphlet.

The alphabetizing by author or title-only entries assists in determining the extent and nature of the writings of a particular individual. For example, Ross T. Christensen is listed as the author or coauthor of 28 works, cited on pages 92-95 of *A Comprehensive Annotated Book of Mormon Bibliography*. About his 1952 article titled, "Present Status of Book of Mormon Archaeology," the annotator writes, "The status thus far is reviewed and the interim conclusion is reached that 'in large part the Book of Mormon is vindicated by archaeological science; but many points still remain . . . to challenge us'" (p. 93). Although much has been

accomplished in the intervening 45 years, the statement still rings true.

Among the ninety books and articles by John L. Sorenson included in this outstanding reference book is *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book*, published in 1992. The annotation for this work reads:

A comprehensive analysis of Book of Mormon geography. Sorenson gives a history and summary of all Latter-day Saints who have written on geography. He indicates what the text says, verse by verse, on geography and presents a trial map based on the text. Also presents problems of establishing distances and deciphering directional statements in the Book of Mormon. (p. 483)

In addition to this valuable summary in the annotated bibliography, one finds in the index citations to 156 other works on geographical aspects of the Book of Mormon. For the serious student, a few hours invested in reading these annotations is a productive introduction to the issues and questions associated with Book of Mormon geography. For the teacher, this comprehensive bibliography assists in identifying which of the many works would be most helpful for further study. For the scholar who wants to explore detailed aspects of a particular idea, *A Comprehensive Annotated Book of Mormon Bibliography* lists and analyzes many of the works with which to begin research.

The subject and name index is detailed enough to include the *Hill Ramah*, but not the *isthmus* or *narrow neck of land* as an entry point. One hundred seventy-nine references are listed in the index under *archaeology*. Index terms such as *anachronisms*, *Anthon transcript*, *book reviews*, *critics of the Book of Mormon*, *literary devices*, *Maya*, *missionary tool*, *petroglyphs*, *Quetzalcoatl*, *Solomon Spaulding*, and *textual variants* direct students, teachers, and scholars of the Book of Mormon to works illuminating various topics and names of interest.

For those who believe in the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and that it was miraculously brought forth and translated as Joseph Smith said it was, *A Guide to Publications on the Book of Mormon: A Selected Annotated Bibliography* is a treasure of

rewarding insights. I noted writings of some current and former LDS Church leaders. For example, Joseph Fielding Smith is the author of 54 entries, including a number from the "Your Question Answered" column in the old *Improvement Era* magazine. Forty-seven of the extensive writings of Ezra Taft Benson on the Book of Mormon are cited and summarized. Bruce R. McConkie is the author of 19 works.

Thirteen articles, speeches, and one book by the current president of the church, Gordon B. Hinckley, are included in both the bibliography and the guide. His feelings for the Prophet Joseph Smith are an oft-repeated theme. In the 1993 book *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, the Man*, edited by Susan Easton Black, Gordon B. Hinckley's speech from a symposium is titled "As One Who Loves the Prophet." The annotator writes:

Author expresses gratitude for the Prophet Joseph Smith who was instrumental in bringing forth the Book of Mormon. Mentions that the Bible was recently rated the most influential book in America, and the Book of Mormon was rated eighth most influential. The author states his belief that the Book of Mormon will be rated number two in time. (p. 202)

Including a diskette version of *A Comprehensive Annotated Book of Mormon Bibliography* in the print edition is an important step toward the next generation of bibliographies. A discussion along the following lines took place five years ago when I served on the Bibliography and Indexes Committee of the History Section of the American Library Association. A few committee members questioned the value of bibliographies printed in the static format of paper. Their opinion was that because bibliographies grow with each passing year of scholarship, the capability to update information in dynamic electronic format is particularly important to bibliography.

As the number of publications on the Book of Mormon continues to grow, the editors, I hope, will find a way to cumulate new citations, both in paper and electronically, so that users can read the latest annotations. A worthwhile project might be to have a periodic update of *A Comprehensive Annotated Book of Mormon Bibliography* available on the FARMS website (*A Selected Anno-*

tated Bibliography in a searchable format is currently available at www.farmsresearch.com/bombbib/main.htm).

Donald Parry, Jeanette Miller, and Sandra Thorne, the editors of this most significant contribution to Book of Mormon study and scholarship, have produced two highly useful bibliographies for distinctly different readerships. *A Guide to Publications on the Book of Mormon: A Selected Annotated Bibliography*, at less than \$20, is a worthy investment for teachers and serious students of the Book of Mormon. The nicely bound *A Comprehensive Annotated Book of Mormon Bibliography* is a \$100 purchase that the scholar and both research and large public libraries will find useful in supplementing their theological and history collections. These two bibliographies represent substantial progress in identifying the expanding field of Book of Mormon studies to which the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies has contributed much.