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*Name Index to the Library of Congress Collection of Mormon Diaries* Special Collections Department, Merrill Library, Utah State University

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## Book Reviews

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS DEPARTMENT. Merrill Library. Utah State University. *Name Index to the Library of Congress Collection of Mormon Diaries*. Logan, Utah, Western Text Society, 1971. 391 pp. \$25.00.

(Reviewed by Chad J. Flake, Special Collections librarian at Brigham Young University. Professor Flake is an expert on Mormon bibliography and has published in *Dialogue*, *Utah Historical Quarterly*, and *BYU Studies*.)

In 1936, under the auspices of the Federal Writer's Project, the Utah Writer's Project decided to use part of its funds to transcribe diaries and memoirs of early pioneers. Juanita Brooks's "Just a Copin'—Word for Word" in the Winter 1969 issue of the *Utah Historical Quarterly* describes this effort. The result of this project was the transcription of over 400 diaries, memoirs, and interviews. One copy of each transcription was placed in the Library of Congress, another copy with the Utah Historical Society, and others in various libraries within the state. For years these have been a primary source for magazine articles, theses, dissertations, and books on Utah and Mormon history. The Library of Congress has now made available on microfilm the entire collection to libraries interested in Utah history.

It might be argued that with such a long time elapsing, most of the important historical material has already been gleaned from these diaries and is now more easily obtained in printed forms. However, as they represent such an easy tool for research, and particularly for research on the undergraduate level where the original materials have copious restrictions, this is an invaluable acquisition for libraries within the state.

One of the difficulties in using diaries is finding material on a subject without reading all the diaries. Even competent catalogers of this type of material (manuscripts, typescripts,



etc.) can make only a very few subject headings for the public catalog.

It is therefore of great importance to note the publication of the *Name Index to the Library of Congress Collection of Mormon Diaries*. This publication, Volume 1, No. 2 of the Western Text Society, consists of (1) a list of the diaries in the collection and (2) an alphabetical listing of the names found in the diaries. A quick check with indexes of some of the same diaries prepared by the late Newburn Butt of Brigham Young University, assures one that the staff of the Special Collection Department of Utah State University Library has done an adequate job of basic indexing.

However, it does not speak for the quality of the work. During neither the transcription of the original diary nor the compilation of the current work has there been any attempt to correct errors in names or to determine full names where only "Bishop" or "Brother," etc., are given. Granted, at this point some are difficult to verify, due to the fact that the editors are not able to consult the originals. This is a major fault of the original transcription. The editing of indexes is difficult, time consuming, and usually left to a clerk-typist. Now, with only a transcription, the scholar is unable to check the original for vital dates or names. Oftentimes this is even the fault of the author of the diary. In the diary of Lucy Hannah White, on which the reviewer is currently working, the author misspells her own family names, as well as others. However, it is not difficult to note the correct form of the name in a majority of these instances, and it should have been the responsibility of the transcribers to make such notations wherever possible. In the current work, these errors are continued. One cannot find a page without errors. This multiplying of errors—errors in the original, errors in the transcription, and possibly more errors in the current work—is unfortunate.

The past is past, and one cannot do anything about the original transcriptions or about teaching the authors how to spell. But the person doing the indexing for the present work could have clarified most of the names at the time of the indexing. After a rough working copy was typed, someone could have taken it to the Church Historian's Library or the Genealogical Society Library to correct a bulk of the errors. It is not, for

instance, difficult to find that Attorney Baskin is Robert N., or that H.C. Kimball is Heber C., that Captain Flake is James Madison, or that Baily is spelled Bailey, Carlile is Carlisle, Frei is Fry, Alred is Allred, that Birbeck, R.R. and Birkbeck, R.R. are the same, Brother Bleak is James G., Bringherst is Bringhurst, Eleza Cox is Eliza Cox, or that Captain Brown and James Brown are the same person.

Another annoyance is the arrangement of unknown names. They are in alphabetical order by their salutary word: Attorney, Sister, Bishop, President, etc. It would have been much more sensible to have put all unknowns at the beginning of each name list and to have listed them alphabetically by their surnames.