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Mormon Bibliography 1979–1980

Scott H. Duvall and Scott C. Dunn

In the past two or three years we have seen a definite increase in the number of publishers catering to the Mormon audience. We daily see and hear advertisements promoting new novels, diaries, and inspirational material designed to appeal to the Mormon culture.

For many years Deseret Book and Bookcraft were the only publishers dealing with and soliciting manuscripts with Mormon content. Then Horizon Publishers in Bountiful, Utah, and Hawkes Publishing in Salt Lake City were established. Perhaps the success of these latter two firms has inspired the proliferation of ‘‘Mormon’’ publishers we now have.

To be sure, some of these recent efforts are private ventures, designed to provide an outlet for the author’s thoughts, creative efforts, or family history. There are several of this type listed in the 1979–1980 Mormon Bibliography. But we have also seen the emergence of several publishers that evidently have visions of larger prospects and circulation.

Randall Publishers, for instance, has existed for only two and one-half years. Formerly Ensign Publishers of Las Vegas, Nevada, Randall moved to Orem, Utah, to have better access to the Mormon market. In 1980 this firm was third (behind Deseret Book and Bookcraft) in volume sales in Utah among Utah publishers. The company has a goal of creating a paperback market for the Mormon novel.

The history of Randall Publishers parallels that of Council Press of Provo, Butterfly Publishing of Santa Barbara, Liberty Publishing of Provo, and a few others. But the growth of Mormon publishing is also evident in other endeavors. For example, Mormons are also buying scriptures, dramatizations, history, talks, and essays on cassettes. There are now many recording companies providing these materials. Furthermore, the success of BYU Studies, Sunstone, and Dialogue
points to the development of a Mormon audience interested in contemporary and doctrinal issues.

All of which raises the question: Why? Why is the Mormon community creating a favorable market for these publishers? First, often the public identifies with the subject matter, thus reinforcing the feeling of “belonging” to the group. The publishers may feel they are offering an alternative to the less wholesome material on the market today. In addition, the sesquicentennial undoubtedly had an effect on publishing during 1980. Also, arguments are heard that on the one hand Mormon readers are gullible, that they will read anything that hints of Mormonism; on the other hand that Mormon readers are becoming more sophisticated, that they are demanding more exploration of history and doctrine.

In any case, the proliferation of Mormon literature, whether it consist of fictional, historical, or inspirational works, whether it be in book form, sound recording, or magazines, has made substantial gains recently and will probably be with us in the future. It will be interesting to watch.

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