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A Book Review--Or What You Never Wanted to Know About Bibliographies

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BOOK REVIEW

A BOOK REVIEW—OR WHAT YOU NEVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT BIBLIOGRAPHIES

LAW, NATURAL RESOURCES, AND LAND USE: THE ENVIRONMENTAL COLLECTION OF THE PAUL L. BOLEY LAW LIBRARY. Compiled by Joe Stephens. Portland, Oregon: Northwestern School of Law of Lewis and Clark College, 1986. Five volumes. \$65.00.

BY
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I. INTRODUCTION

Good grief! A review of a bibliography? When there is so much published material worth reading, why should one read, or write this book review? These questions are especially pertinent if one notes the decline in the number of book reviews published in law reviews.¹ What purpose does a review of a mere bibliography serve? Is this book review, in the words of Professor Francis Allen, a source of “pleasure and profit?”² Pleasure, perhaps—but where’s the profit? Will it make a “humanistic contribution” to legal literature by providing a discussion of environmental concerns in a less painful and more palatable form?³

Bibliographies, read cover-to-cover, are definitely painful.

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1. Cavers, *Book Reviews in Law Reviews: An Endangered Species*, 77 MICH. L. REV. 327 (1979). Despite Michigan’s continuing publication of its innovative annual, *Survey of Books Relating to the Law*, no other law review has ventured into the foray.

2. Allen, *In Praise of Book Reviews*, 79 MICH. L. REV. 557, 558 (1981).

3. *Id.* at 560.

Thank goodness, few use bibliographies in this way. However, this review will at least suggest to its readers that bibliographies continue to be a vital and necessary part of published legal literature.⁴

A bibliography is nothing more than a "list or catalog, often with descriptive or critical notes, of writings relating to a particular subject, period or author."⁵ A bibliography, then, is like a library's catalog of books (whether in small oak drawers, in microfiche or on-line) except that bibliographies are generally limited in some way. A catalog of books in a law library's collection is presumably limited to law-related writings. However, most library users recognize that this body of legal material, though specialized and limited, can be overwhelming to use with the conventional index—the card catalog.

Both the sheer increase in the number of publications, as well as our better (often computer) access to this huge body of information, tend to exacerbate the weaknesses of card catalogs as finding tools.

The need to organize this expanding world of recorded knowledge becomes all the greater and all the more impossible. As our library catalogues grow older, larger and perhaps more refined, they also become more cumbersome, more limited in their coverage and more subject to varying interpretations of their rules. Older writings are rarely recatalogued to meet new needs, while detailed subject analysis of contents was long ago deferred to other bibliographical enterprises⁶

Referring to such bibliographical enterprises, Professor Danner inquires—have "bibliographies compiled by intermediaries become obsolete with an automated research environment, where each scholar can access a world of information through an electronic work station?"⁷ The editors of the first *Michigan Law Review Survey of Books Relating to the Law* stated in their preface that "[t]his issue is, in part, an act of modesty, an acknowledgment that not all legal truth is printed in law reviews."⁸ Bravo! In

4. See generally Danner, *From the Editor: On Bibliographies*, 78 LAW LIBRARY J. 1 (1986).

5. WEBSTER'S THIRD NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY 211 (1981).

6. R. KRUMMEL, *BIBLIOGRAPHIES, THEIR AIMS AND METHODS* 6 (1984).

7. Danner, *supra* note 4.

8. *Editors' Preface*, 77 MICH. L. REV. [ix] (1979).

a similar vein, not all bibliographic truth is found through the use of computers.⁹

It is true that computers have given us better access to the burgeoning world of information. Therefore, where do printed bibliographies, out-of-date as soon as they are printed and rarely comprehensive, fit?

Location and retrieval of publications on any subject is still a very time-consuming project. The multiplicity of computerized information retrieval systems—such as DIALOG, BRS and NEXIS—the enormous amount of periodical literature, book and document publication, as well as the huge bibliographic utilities—Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN), Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), and Western Library Network (WLN)—require that a user have some familiarity with all these information resources. Though we have made great strides toward individual electronic work stations, very few researchers can access everything they might need. We have not yet cracked all compatibility codes. And, frankly, when a researcher asks to see everything that can be located on computer-aided legal instruction, for example, most will be overwhelmed if more than one source must be consulted.¹⁰

Even if we can convince researchers that bibliographies should be consulted, do bibliographies serve any other useful function? Most librarians use bibliographies to help in the development and selection of books to acquire for the library. Even so, many law libraries purchase printed subject bibliographies very selectively.¹¹

9. See generally Danner, *supra* note 4; R. KRUMMEL, *supra* note 6.

10. A librarian helping a researcher with this inquiry might refer her to the following resources:

Library catalog for all books and documents on the subject.

Legal periodical literature from one or more of these sources: Legaltrac, *Legal Resource Index* on DIALOG, LEXIS, or WESTLAW, *Index to Legal Periodicals*, *Current Law Index*, Wilsonline.

Bibliographic utility like OCLC, RLIN, or WLN to locate books published but not held in your library.

Full text of law review articles on WESTLAW or LEXIS.

Nonlegal periodical literature from DIALOG, NEXIS, and a variety of print sources.

11. For example, the UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON LAW LIBRARY, *BOOK SELECTION MANUAL* (1968) (still in use today) suggests that a bibliography should not be

Particularly in a subject area such as the environment, a bibliography consisting of a sub-set of the entire collection of a law library such as *Law, Natural Resources, and Land Use*, makes great sense. The flexibility of the compiler of the bibliography which enables her to address "the particular needs of specialized readers has been seen as a major justification for our continued work with and creation of bibliographies."¹²

What are those particular needs of a specialized user which make a bibliography like *Law, Natural Resources, and Land Use* worth compiling and using? The first need is embodied in the nature of the subject matter itself. Any scholar, student, or librarian wishing to answer legal questions on the subject of the environment will encounter a relatively new and complex field with a nearly unlimited scope of coverage. The writings in this field reflect the incredible diversity of the subject. And wading through all of the information available by using a library's catalog to find and locate answers to specific questions is time-consuming and can be frustrating as well.

Because the field of learning we call the environment is so diverse, a great many subject headings must be reviewed when using library catalogs to locate all relevant titles. In addition, the nature of the topic requires reference to nonlegal as well as legal treatises, documents, monographs, and other publications. Therefore, browsing the collection of a library that shelves by subject using the Library of Congress' classification scheme¹³ means looking at hundreds of separate classification numbers which will not fall next to one another.

The variety of specific classification subjects dealing with environmental issues can be seen easily by reference to the series of bibliographies under review. The following are just a few of the broad classes to which books about the environment will be assigned:

- HC Economic History
- HD Land
- HT Urban Planning
- KF Law

purchased unless its entries are selective and annotated or its coverage gives better access to a part of the library's collection.

12. R. KRUMMEL, *supra* note 6, at 12.

13. The most prevalent shelving scheme in law libraries.

QH Ecology
RA Public Aspects of Medicine
SD Forestry
TK Nuclear Engineering

Thus, a bibliography on the environment should improve subject access to the panoply of resources in this field. The more specialized the researcher, the more important this criterion becomes.

The second particular function which a bibliography in environmental issues can fulfill is a selective gathering of materials. A bibliography of all works published relating to the environment will be of very little help to the scholar or acquisitions librarian because of its inordinate and cumbersome size. However, a list of all books and documents selected for inclusion in a law library which supports the research and writing needs of a specialized faculty and curriculum should be very helpful indeed.

II. DESCRIPTION

The Environmental Collection of the Paul L. Boley Law Library of Northwestern School of Law of Lewis and Clark College is the sum and substance of a five-part bibliography entitled *Law, Natural Resources, and Land Use*. Each of the five volumes covers different aspects of environmental concerns:

Volume 1 Pollution and Pollution Control
Volume 2 Energy Law and Energy Resources
Volume 3 Natural Resources and Conservation
Volume 4 Land Use and the Public Lands
Volume 5 Law, Environment and Industry

Within each volume, all works are organized first by subject, then alphabetically by the compiler's main entry—usually corporate body, title, or author. As the title indicates, this bibliography "was compiled largely from the shelf list of the library's environmental collection."¹⁴ Although periodicals dealing with the environmental issues are listed in the appendices, individual periodical articles are not included in this work.

The subject headings were selected with the assistance of

14. 1 LAW, NATURAL RESOURCES, AND LAND USE ii (1986).

many sources. However, the compiler warns that "[m]any topics . . . are interrelated and overlapping."¹⁵ Helpful appendices in each volume include lists of dictionaries and glossaries, directories, periodicals, and bibliographies on the subjects contained in that individual volume.

In addition, each of the five volumes has individual author and title indices (including the writings listed in the appendices noted above) and a comprehensive table of contents. Each of the over 7,000 entries in the five-volume compilation has a Library of Congress call number for fast location of the volume in the Paul L. Boley Law Library and in any library using the Library of Congress classification scheme.

III. EVALUATION

In his work on bibliographies, Krummel reviews the most important statements of criteria on which bibliographies should be judged.¹⁶ The American Library Association (ALA) has promulgated a similar nine-point statement that provides an excellent vehicle for an evaluation of *Law, Natural Resources, and Land Use*.¹⁷

The subject matter of this bibliography is clearly defined in the title of the work. Note that the compiler, Joe Stephens, did not title his bibliography, *Environmental Law*. Interestingly enough, the two earlier published bibliographies found by this reviewer include "Environmental Law" in their titles.¹⁸ Although some repetition would be expected, *Law, Natural Resources, and Land Use* is more current (thus indexing titles on hazardous waste and other current topics) and more comprehensive (7,000 titles to the 600 covered in the Robinson bibliography).

Within the series of bibliographies, the scope of coverage is objectively limited to those publications catalogued and included in the collection of a law library which serves the research needs of the Natural Resources Law Institute. As long as book selectors

15. *Id.*

16. R. KRUMMEL, *supra* note 6, at 139.

17. *Id.* at 143-46.

18. N. ROBINSON, *BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL LAW COLLECTION IN THE PACE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW LIBRARY* (1984); M. SCHWARTZ, *ENVIRONMENTAL LAW: A GUIDE TO INFORMATION SOURCES* (1977).

at the Paul L. Boley Law Library have exercised consistent and knowledgeable judgment when adding material to the law library's collection, librarians and researchers can rely on the bibliography's coverage. The bibliographic entries, the substance of this work, would then have a direct relationship to the quality of the library's environmental collection. *Law, Natural Resources, and Land Use* does not purport to include all works on the environment. For example, the Robinson bibliography is not included and, therefore, must not have been added to the library's collection.

The compiler notes his method of compilation. Items were selected for inclusion from the shelflist of the environmental collection in the Paul L. Boley Law Library. Thus, the intellectual challenge of this bibliography was not the selection of the items to include, but the organization of those items.

Subject organization of all items has been accomplished by the classification of each book into one of five broad categories.¹⁹ Then each item listed in the bibliography was assigned another series of subject headings according to a scheme laid out in the Table of Contents of each volume. The subject organization is quite logical to the specialized or knowledgeable researcher and far superior to the card catalog and standard subject headings in accessing these printed sources.

However, for the beginner, selection of the correct volume to use may be more difficult. For example, in trying to locate information resources on hazardous wastes, I performed fruitless searches in Volume 5 (Law, Environment and Industry) and 4 (Land Use and Public Lands) before I found a whole section on my topic in Volume 1 (Pollution and Pollution Control). Rather than considering the polluting aspects of hazardous wastes, I had been thinking specifically of the difficulties encountered by people and businesses in the use of land which had been the site of the dumping of hazardous wastes and of industry's response and role in clean-up and liability problems.

The particular difficulty I experienced could easily be minimized if a sixth volume of this series were published. The indices in each volume—author and title—are very helpful, but really should be cumulated for maximum ease of use. In addition, the

19. See *supra* text accompanying note 14.

individual tables of contents should be cumulated and turned into a comprehensive subject index to the 7,000 titles covered in the series.

As to other aids in the use of the bibliographies, the preface might have included a discussion of why five separate bibliographies were published, a statement of purpose of the environmental collection in the Paul L. Boley Law Library, an explanation of the selection of the title of the bibliography, and a warning to the non-law trained user that much of the material published about the environment will be found in laws, cases, administrative decisions, and regulations—resources outside the scope of this publication.²⁰ The inclusion of call numbers for each entry is particularly helpful; however, the locational abbreviation AVF was never translated. Although this designation is probably well known in the Paul L. Boley Law Library (and the reviewer may have guessed it stands for audio visual format), a key should have been given in the preface.

Law, Natural Resources, and Land Use does not include annotations which are generally very helpful to a user. However, a decision to include annotations may have, due to the constraints of time and money, prevented publication of this useful series.

The bibliographic format is consistent, clearly described by the compiler, complete as well as accurate. As a retrospective bibliography, the ALA statement suggests that the time lag between closing the bibliography and its publication should be kept to a minimum.²¹ The introductory remarks do not indicate what date bibliographic coverage stops. A quick glance through the series shows few 1986 publication dates. However, the bibliography does indicate that the library's collection began to specialize in environmental materials in 1970, the year the first piece of national environmental legislation²² came into effect. The library's collection covers the relevant and important time period during which the publication of material on this topic began. The potential comprehensiveness of the listing is excellent and limited only by actual selection criteria over the years.

20. See, e.g., N. ROBINSON, *supra* note 18, at 7-14 and 80-95.

21. R. KRUMMEL, *supra* note 6, at 146.

22. National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Pub. L. No. 91-190, 83 Stat. 852 (1970) (codified at 42 U.S.C. § 4321 (1982)).

Unlike its recently-published cousin, the Robinson bibliography,²³ the format of this five-volume series is legible and very easy to use. The type faces used in the Robinson publication made location and identification of various subject sections *very* difficult.

In conclusion, *Law, Natural Resources, and Land Use* has performed a service to the community of people who need access to information about the environment. Its subject organization is a real blessing when dealing with this complex and interrelating body of law and its many interdisciplinary aspects. A cumulated subject index is a must, however, to take full advantage of the compiler's subject knowledge. Though these bibliographies are spiral bound and not hardbound, a decision presumably made for economic reasons, they could certainly be hard bound by libraries and other users.

Should you buy this set for your office or library? What about the criticism that this series will no longer be current in a year or two? Though that is certainly true, does it mean we should never publish a work if it will be less valuable or useable in the future? Even the Schwartz bibliography,²⁴ published ten years ago, leaves its mark on the literature. And it is only because of the publication of this new series of bibliographies and the Robinson²⁵ work that the usefulness of the Schwartz resource guide has diminished at all. Working from a basically comprehensive, well-organized guide to environmental literature, even if it does not include publications from the last two or ten years, will always have a place in a researcher's bag of tricks.

Typically small in size and fixed in time, they [bibliographies] further serve to question some of our prevalent assumptions about efficiency in size. They argue collectively that our bibliographical macrocosm needs both the 'tight,' large-scale, bureaucratic forms, and the 'loose,' intimate and unpredictable forms that they represent. As such, bibliographies serve to work against monopolies of knowledge in so far as they may help to re-structure them. They improve the macrocosm both by contributing to its records and also by offering prospects for its analysis and re-definition. Bibliog-

23. N. ROBINSON, *supra* note 18.

24. M. SCHWARTZ, *supra* note 18.

25. N. ROBINSON, *supra* note 18.

raphies will be around, in any event, as long as they are needed.²⁶

Evaluated against the five criteria suggested by John Shaw Billings: accuracy, completeness, absence of redundancy or repetition, form, and ease of use,²⁷ *Law, Natural Resources, and Land Use* comes up a winner. The book selector or researcher, by using this series of bibliographies, will be able to find the books needed with the least expenditure of time and trouble because of the comprehensive subject scheme within which the titles are arranged. *Law, Natural Resources, and Land Use* illustrates that there is still a place for the "skilled compiler and analyst of a specialized literature who is prepared to create a path for later researchers."²⁸

26. R. KRUMMEL, *supra* note 6, at 140.

27. *Id.* at 139.

28. Danner *supra* note 4, at 4.