
U.S. Government Publications in the Humanities

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The United States government claims to publish documents on a broad range of subjects. The breadth of this coverage is emphasized by such phrases as: "subjects ranging from agriculture to zoology,"⁷¹ and "Scientists, businessmen, students, and many other Americans depend on the Federal Depository Library System for important Government information."⁷² The humanities are not specifically listed in the phrases above, but there are U.S. government publications for those interested in art, architecture, film, folklore, literature, and music. The total number of such publications is relatively small, but they are often unique sources for the information they present. This article will review publication activities in the humanities by federal agencies, calling attention to some significant contributions to the literature of these disciplines.

Art and Architecture

The Smithsonian Institution and the museums under its administration—National Museum of American Art, Freer Gallery, National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery, Hirshhorn Museum, and National Museum of African Art—produce most government art publications. These museums prepare exhibitions of paintings and sculpture as well as pottery, architecture, furniture, photography, and other art forms. The catalogs produced in conjunction with an exhibition range in size from a few to hundreds of pages. A typical catalog is *More Than Land or Sky: Art from Appalachia* (1981) [SI6.2:Ap4] which presents an exhibition organized by and shown at the National Museum of American Art before it traveled to museums in the thirteen-state Appalachian region. It contains reproductions (some in color) of works by the sixty-nine artists in the show, with biographical information on and statements from each. All museum catalogs contain information and illus-

trations which aid the understanding and appreciation of the works being presented.

The National Park Service of the Department of the Interior has been concerned with historic preservation since its creation in 1916. Some of its publications give details about buildings under its care, such as the Carl Sandburg house in Flat Rock, NC. An ongoing series designed to provide guidance to the owner or architect concerned with historic buildings is "Preservation Briefs" [I29.84:], published by the Preservation Assistance Division of the NPS. The Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service of the Interior Department has published the highly specialized *Gaslighting in America: A Guide for Historic Preservation* (1978) [I70.8:G21] by Denys Peter Myers, an architectural historian. The text gives historical context to the 119 plates chosen as illustrations. The Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) began in 1933 and continues today under the joint supervision of the National Park Service, the Library of Congress, and the American Institute of Architects. In 1983, the Library of Congress made available *Historic America: Buildings, Structures, and Sites* [LC1.2:H62/5], a 708 page volume, published to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of HABS. The first half of the volume includes sixteen essays with illustrations, and the last half is a comprehensive checklist of the more than sixteen thousand places listed.

The Commission of Fine Arts, an independent agency established in 1910 to guide the architectural development of Washington, published seven volumes on Georgetown architecture between 1967 and 1970. It has recently published *Sixteenth Street Architecture*, vol. 2 [FA1.2:Ar2/v.2], the last in its four-volume series on the architecture of Massachusetts Avenue and Sixteenth Street.

Film

The Library of Congress began collecting motion pictures as early as 1894, and in 1949 the scope of this collection was broadened to include television programs. In 1978, the Motion Picture,

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Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division was formed and has since published such books as *Wonderful Inventions* (1985) [LC40.2:W84] and *Music for Silent Films* (1988) [LC1.6/4:M97]. The historical essays in *Wonderful Inventions* take us through the silent film era to television and the new technology of today. Illustrated with over four hundred pictures and also containing musical examples, the book is accompanied by two sound recordings of selections from the film scores referred to in the essays. *Music for Silent Films (1894-1929): A Guide* is not only a guide to sources at the Library of Congress and other collections, but it also contains an historical essay about silent film music and is illustrated with film stills, sheet music covers, and other photographs. The Copyright Office of the Library of Congress has prepared catalogs of motion pictures covering the entire history of the movie industry. Scholars and film enthusiasts alike benefit from these works.

Folklore

Folklore has been collected and made available for nearly a hundred years in Smithsonian Institution and Library of Congress publications. In 1976, The American Folklore Center in the Library of Congress was created specifically to "preserve and present American folklife."³ That intent of Congress is carried out by the Center's publications such as *Folklife Annual* [LC39.14:], *American Folk Music and Folklore Recordings, a Selected List* [LC39.12:], volumes in its *Studies in American Folklife* series [classed separately], and *Folklife Center News* [LC39.10:]. Other divisions of the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Interior Department continue to produce publications which present not only American folklore, but also that of other cultures around the world as well.

Literature

The Library of Congress is the major source of government publications concerned with literature, most of which are bibliographies and catalogs. One useful annual annotated bibliography is *Books for Children* [LC2.11:], compiled each year since 1964 by a committee chaired by the head of LC's Children's Literature Center. A new bibliography for those with a different literary interest is *Contemporary Authors of the German-Speaking Countries of Europe* (1988) [LC1.12/2:G31/4], by Margrit B. Krewson. It includes complete lists of works by those authors as well as works about them.

Poetry readings and literary lectures began in the Library of Congress during the 1940s. The first lecture was given by Thomas Mann in 1942 and published the following year. Lectures and readings continue. A more recent publication in the lecture series is *Four Dubliners—Wilde, Yeats, Joyce, and Beckett* (1986) [LC1.2:D85] by Richard Ellmann. The Library of Congress Consultanship in Poetry was created in 1936. A lively chronicle of the men and women who have held this unique position is William McGuire's *Poetry's Catbird Seat* (1988) [LC1.2:P75/6].

Library of Congress publications are so numerous and they have been produced for so many years that it is impossible for these few examples to do more than hint at the many literary publications available or the importance they have had on the dissemination of literary information.

Music

The Library of Congress and the Smithsonian Institution have been responsible for most music government publications. The National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities now also add to works on this subject. The publications of the Music Division of the Library of Congress include bibliographies, discographies, instrument catalogs and checklists, exhibition catalogs, lectures, and biographies. Some examples are: *The Musical Languages of Elliott Carter* (1985) [LC12.2:M976] by Charles Rosen; *Musical Instruments in the Dayton C. Miller Flute Collection at the Library of Congress: a Catalog* (1982) [LC12.2:F67/3 v.1]; *Ignacy Jan Paderewski, 1860-1941: a Biographical Sketch and a Selective List of Reading Materials* (1984) [LC1.12:P13]; and *Perspectives on John Philip Sousa* (1983) [LC12.2:So8/2]. Library of Congress general publications in 1976 included facsimiles of Mozart and Mendelssohn compositions in the LC collection.

Music is also part of the American Folklore Center. One of its important contributions is *Ethnic Recordings in America: a Neglected Heritage* (1982) [LC39.2:R24/982]. Some of the titles listed previously in the Folklore section also include music.

The Smithsonian is an active publisher of books on music. The variety of its coverage is shown by such titles as *The Musical Instruments of Joseph Haydn* (1977) [SI1.28:38] and *And The Band Played On, 1776-1976* (1976) [SI1.2:B22/776-976]. The Smithsonian continues to make available research on the American Indian with *Ceremonies of the Pawnee* (1981) [SI1.33:27/pt.1-2] and *The Ojibwa Dance Drum* (1982) [SI1.43:2].

Humanities

The National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities are two agencies almost all of whose publications are of interest. They publish two journals, *Arts Review* (NEA) [NE2.13:] and *Humanities* (NEH) [NF3.11:], which contain articles usually based on work supported by the endowments. These journals also include information on the grants awarded and grant application deadlines. The Library of Congress publishes *Performing Arts Annual* [LC1.46:] which explores music, film, dance, and theater with essays based on materials in its collections. These serial publications are aimed at the general reader and contain lively articles with good illustrations.

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

This division of the Library of Congress supplies useful publications such as: *Braille Books* (annual) [LC19.9/2:], *Braille Book Review* (bi-monthly) [LC19.9:], *Talking Book Topics* (bi-monthly) [LC19.10:], as well as *For Younger Readers*, *Braille and Talking Books* (biennial) [LC19.11/2:]. For the musician, it publishes *The Musical Mainstream* [LC19.12:], a bimonthly which contains original articles as well as reprints from national music periodicals; *Music & Musicians* [LC19.2:M97/], a series of volumes which list braille scores, large-print scores and books, and instructional cassette recordings. Useful reference books are the *Dictionary of Braille Music Signs* (1979) [LC19.2:B73/10] and *International Directory of Braille Music Collections* (1987) [LC19.2:In8/3/987]. All of these publications are free and are available in large-print editions; some are also available in braille editions.

Recordings

Folk music and some folk tales, concert music, and literary recordings as well as a small number of video recordings are available from the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division, Library of Congress. Both North and South American folk music is included. The literary recordings are mostly of American poets reading their own works. Most of these recordings are available in phonodisc as well as cassette format.

Locating Humanities Publications

When looking for current publications, a good place to begin is *U.S. Government Books: Publica-*

tions For Sale by the Government Printing Office [GP3.17/5:]. This catalog, published four times a year and free to libraries and individuals, lists and describes some of the more popular general interest publications available from the Superintendent of Documents. The serial publications listed above such as *Humanities*, *Folklife Annual*, and *Performing Arts Annual* also include descriptive information on humanities publications available. The Library of Congress and the Smithsonian Institution issue annual catalogs of their in-print publications. These sources will lead one to most humanities publications in print. The *Monthly Catalog* is still the most complete index to U.S. government documents. The capacity to search government documents online now makes it possible to locate humanities publications that one would not even have thought to look for just a few years ago.

The titles mentioned in this article are only representative examples, but all were chosen from titles available to depository libraries and so were widely distributed. These publications validate the government's claim of A-to-Z subject coverage, and demonstrate the promised diversity to be found in U.S. government publications.

Agency Addresses

Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402

Commission of Fine Arts
708 Jefferson Place N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Department of the Interior
1899 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Library of Congress Publications in Print
Central Services Division
Library of Congress
Washington, D.C. 20540

Library of Congress, Motion Picture, Broadcasting
and Recorded Sound Division
Washington, D.C. 20540

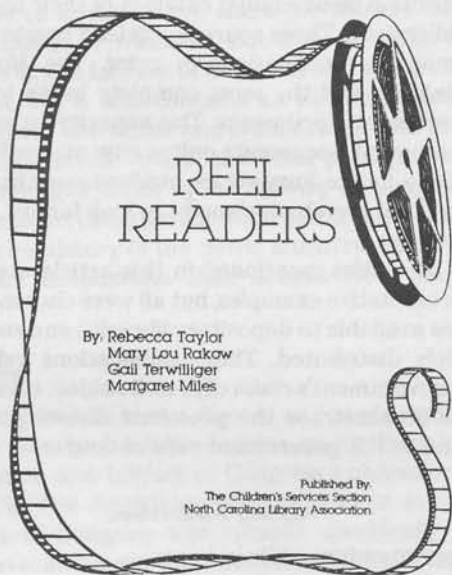
National Endowment for the Arts
2401 E St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20506

National Endowment for the Humanities
806 15th St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20506

Publication Sales
Smithsonian Institution Press
111 N. Capitol Street
Washington, D.C. 20002

References

1. *Your Source for Government Information, Depository Libraries* [brochure] (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1982).
2. U.S. Government Printing Office, *The Designation Procedure for Federal Depository Libraries* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1986):1.
3. *American Folklife Preservation Act*, 89 Stat. 1129 (1976).



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