

Among the Mormons

A Survey of Current Literature

Edited by Ralph W. Hansen

As has been the custom in past Autumn issues of *Dialogue*, this column is devoted to some aspect of locating Mormon collections in research libraries. Previous surveys have dealt with "The Availability of Information Concerning the Mormons" by S. Lyman Tyler, "The Schroeder Mormon Collection at the Wisconsin State Historical Society Library" by Richard Cracroft and Thomas Schwartz, and a general survey of Mormon materials available on the antiquarian book market. In this issue Deana L. Astle surveys Utah sources. Her work is particularly appropriate in view of the criticism leveled at Stanley Hirshson's recent biography of Brigham Young (reviewed in the past two issues of *Dialogue*). It is to be hoped that this introduction will forestall future arm chair historians who attempt to write Mormon history without availing themselves of the abundant resources in Utah libraries.

SOURCES OF MORMON AMERICANA IN UTAH

Deana L. Astle

INTRODUCTION

This paper was written during the summer of 1968 for a course in special problems in the acquisition of materials at the UCLA Graduate School of Library Service. The original paper has been revised and condensed for the readers of *Dialogue* since much of it dealt with the historiographical prob-

lems inherent in the collecting of Mormon material, a subject which has been treated at length by *Dialogue* and other sources.

This paper is not intended to be an exhaustive study, but is rather a brief survey of the collections of Mormon Americana in the Salt Lake City area, all of which I have visited with the exception of the Church Historian's Office. The purpose, then, of this treatise is to introduce these libraries to those people unfamiliar with their resources and to discuss some of the idiosyncracies of each collection. Also included is a brief discussion of the new bibliography on Mormon Americana.

LIBRARY OF THE CHURCH HISTORIAN'S OFFICE

One of the most important libraries for the study of Mormon history is the Library of the Church Historian's Office, located in the Church Administration Building in Salt Lake City. One of the major functions of this office is to collect, compile, and preserve the records of the Church from the time of its beginning in 1830 to the present. In its library are filed

all printed works by Church organizations, Church members, and others who write about the Church including friendly and anti-Mormon works; the minute books of all Church organizations, patriarchal blessings, manuscript histories, journals, documents, letters, motion picture films, filmstrips, recordings, tapes, pictures, portraits, and other materials that contribute to the Church history or a record of its members.¹

It has easily the largest and most complete collection on the Mormon Church in existence. Its manuscript and journal history collection is unexcelled for records of the pioneers and early members of the Church, though its usefulness is somewhat limited because of restrictions placed upon access to some of the material. Use of manuscript journals and diaries is restricted to descendants of the writer, and others who obtain permission from the family of the writer or the Church Historian.

The resources of the Library are available to all those doing serious research, though "the materials are not available to those whose purpose is to discredit the Church."² Copying of some manuscript material is also restricted as there is a "firm policy not to permit copies of their primary source material to be made."³ It is a reference collection entirely.

As of 1965⁴ the library section, which houses the printed material, contained almost 92,000 items, 26,000 of which were catalogued and easily accessible. This figure includes 1900 doctrinal works, 200 historical works, 5800

¹"Guide to the Historian's Office Library-Archives," p. 1.

²*Ibid.*

³Stanley B. Kimball, *Sources of Mormon History in Illinois, 1839-48: An Annotated Catalog of the Microfilm Collection at Southern Illinois University* (Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1966), p. 95.

⁴Figures are from the "Report of the Office of the Church Historian Including the Historian's Office Library-Archives for the Five Year Period 1961-1965 and an Inventory of Holdings as of December 31, 1965," p. 4.

LDS periodicals, 570 factional works (dissident groups), 700 pro-Mormon works (presumably favorable accounts by non-Mormons), 1200 anti-Mormon works, 7500 "other non-Mormon" and 3300 "other LDS." Pamphlets make up the bulk of the uncatalogued material. The manuscript collection boasts approximately 970,000 items, 14,500 of which are in book form and 1600 of which are on film. 240,000 of these items are ward, stake, and mission records.

SALT LAKE CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Salt Lake City Public Library maintains a closed stack collection of Mormon Americana and Utabiana, as do the other libraries herein discussed, but serves a slightly different clientele than that of the Church Historian's Office Library. Mr. Robert Thomas, the former librarian, commented that the general public feels more free to use his collection than those of the university and special libraries in the area. He has tried, therefore, to duplicate much material found elsewhere in the state to provide a viable resource for the people of Salt Lake City.

Much of the collection of this library was inherited in 1898 from the earlier Masonic Public Library which contained many now rare items on Utah and Mormon history. The collection is maintained by purchasing current material in duplicate so that one copy can circulate, by purchasing microfilm editions of early Utah and Mormon works for those items which are either too difficult or expensive to obtain otherwise, and by searching through antiquarian book dealer catalogs for the few books pertaining to Mormon history which the library does not now have. The Mormon and Mormon related material in the library, excluding microfilm and bound newspapers, totals about 4500 volumes.

THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH LIBRARY

Much material on the Mormons and Utah can be found in the Western Americana collection at the University of Utah. The core of this collection was obtained from the old Utah Territorial Library, for which there exists a checklist from the late 1800s, and from the John A. Widtsoe collection which was strong in early church periodicals, such as the *Elders Journal* and the *Evening and Morning Star*. Though adequate, this collection is small in comparison with some of the great collections, and does not have much unique material. Under the guidance of Everett L. Cooley, who became curator in 1969, the collection has begun to grow in importance. The acquisitions program is becoming much more vigorous and some choice items are being acquired. For example, the library recently purchased John Taylor's copy of the *Book of Commandments* which at one time belonged to Hyrum Smith. It is one of the six or so copies in existence today and is considered to be a perfect copy.

Though the library has early editions of the Book of Mormon and other works, its strength lies in its collection of pamphlets and manuscripts, a

collection which Dr. Cooley intends to enlarge. The library already has thousands of items which are presently being catalogued and made available for public use. Until the cataloging is completed, many items will be inaccessible to scholars. The cataloging has uncovered many rare items of which the library was unaware.

THE UTAH STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY LIBRARY

The Utah State Historical Society Library has much of value for the historian. The library contains about 5,000 volumes, which includes printed material, pamphlets, manuscripts, and articles on microfilm. Although the library has few rare books, its collection is strong in microfilm copies of manuscripts and rare books from such libraries as the Bancroft, Yale (Coe Collection), and the New York Public Library (Berrian Collection).

This library is perhaps most important for its Union Catalog of Mormon material which contains information on more than 10,000 items published from 1830 to the present. It was begun by Dale Morgan in the 1930s in connection with his work on the Federal Writers' Project. He visited libraries throughout the country which had significant collections on the Mormons and listed their holdings. These lists form the core of the Catalog.

The project soon grew to vast proportions and was given to the Society to maintain in 1950. The Catalog includes every item that has been uncovered by its compilers on all aspects of Mormons or Mormonism. Each card in this file lists library location symbols, indicating where a particular item may be found, be it a journal article, a doctrinal work, a history, or whatever.

THE BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

The Brigham Young University Library has the largest collection of Mormon materials available outside the Church Historian's Office. The current acquisitions program is extremely active in acquiring new material, both "pro" and "anti." According to Mr. Donald Schmidt, the assistant director of libraries, the Library is developing an endowment fund to increase the Library's purchasing power, especially at auctions. A recent rare and valuable acquisition was the *Reflector*, the 1829 newspaper in which excerpts from the Book of Mormon were first published under the byline of J. J. Dogberry.

BYU's policy on bidding is related to availability. Material published or written in Utah is of a lower priority than material from New York, Ohio, Missouri or Illinois.

The special collections department contains between 7000 and 8000 items arranged by the modified Dewey 200 series which was expanded by Chad Flake to handle the needs of a large collection on Mormonism. These items range from first editions of the Book of Mormon to diaries, newspaper clippings, histories of the Reorganized Church, diatribes, and bibliographies.

For purchase of current material, which is housed in the main stacks, the library uses the semi-monthly publication *Mormon Americana*. This pub-

lication is a cooperative venture by six Utah libraries which have divided collecting and reporting responsibility for current material on the Mormons and on Utah in general. *Mormon Americana* lists new books, dissertations, chapters in books, journal articles, and reviews reported by the Church Historian's Office, the University of Utah Library, the Utah State University Library, the Salt Lake City Public Library, the Utah State Historical Society Library and the Brigham Young University Library. BYU, for example, has the responsibility of locating and indexing periodical articles. Staff members search all the standard periodical indexes and extract references to articles which deal with Mormonism. The Utah State Historical Society, on the other hand, collects all state historical society journals from those states most likely to have articles on Mormon history. The remaining four libraries divide the responsibility for material in book form.

THE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MORMON AMERICANA

In concluding this survey of Utah libraries, one other item must be mentioned — the bibliographical work being done by Chad Flake, special collections librarian at Brigham Young University, which has resulted in the most comprehensive work on Mormon Americana ever compiled. The history and scope of the project are as follows:

In 1956 a committee was formed by representatives of the six libraries which now compile *Mormon Americana* for the purpose of supervising the preparation and publication of a bibliography based on the Union Catalog of Mormon material at the Utah Historical Society Library. Chad Flake was appointed editor and given leave both to do editorial work and to bring the Catalog up to date. He personally visited several of the collections, including the Huntington, Bancroft, Berrian, and Coe, and commissioned others to survey the collections he was unable to visit. The first unit of this bibliography, covering the years 1830-1929 and containing more than 10,000 items, is scheduled for publication by the University of Utah Press sometime during 1970-71. The second unit, covering the years 1930-1959, is still in the planning stages.

The bibliography will list all works by and about the Church from 1830 to 1928, including pamphlets, journal articles and other types of printed material. Excluded are tourist literature and all fiction which does not have as its central theme Mormons or Mormonism. Many items will be listed with all of their editions, but such popular works as Mark Twain's *Roughing It* will be listed only once, since they are adequately covered in other bibliographies. It will be a union list, giving library locations for all items.

Some of the collections indexed are the Coe Collection at Yale, the Pierce Collection at Harvard, the Schroeder Collection at the Wisconsin State Historical Library, the Library of Congress, the Reorganized Church Historical Library, the Berrian Collection at the New York Public Library, the Huntington Library, the Newberry Library, and the Utah libraries mentioned earlier.

The work being done in Utah is important. The collections are gaining in stature and accessibility. Much of the material being put on sale at Parke-Bernet and elsewhere is gravitating towards the Salt Lake Valley because of the availability of funds and the aggressive acquisitions policies of some of the Utah libraries. The serious historian would do well to investigate these libraries thoroughly before beginning any work on Mormon history.

