

# Review Articles

## Spanish Reference Work

*Manual de fuentes de información.* By Josefa Emilia Sabor. (Contribuciones bibliotecológicas, 2) Buenos Aires: Editorial Kapelusz [1957], 335 p.

Bibliographies of reference books have appeared in English, French, and German, but, until the present, not in Spanish. Señorita Sabor's carefully prepared and well written *Manual* now fills this lacuna, and as the first publication in that language it deserves careful examination by everyone interested in librarianship in Spanish speaking countries. However, one cannot fairly compare it to Miss Winchell's *Guide to Reference Books* or to Mlle Malclès' *Sources du travail bibliographique*, because Señorita Sabor obviously had a different—and more limited—objective in mind for her *Manual*. Its arrangement (by type of reference book) and its approach (history of each type followed by lists) remind one more of Shores' *Basic Reference Sources* and of Malclès' *Cours de bibliographie* than of either of the above works. Like them it is aimed primarily at the student of library science. One should not attempt to carry this analogy too far, however, because there are several important differences between the new work and the French and American publications. In the first place, Señorita Sabor's compilation limits itself to some of the chief types of reference books (encyclopedias, dictionaries, bibliographies, biographical compilations, yearbooks, statistical sources, and "reference works for general information"), while the other two present basic subject bibliography in addition to these types. Both Mlle Malclès and Señorita Sabor offer broader coverage, linguistically and geographically speaking, than Mr. Shores, who has limited himself largely to works in English; the former includes sources for several of the smaller as well as for the major western European countries, while the latter covers English, American, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Latin American publications. One might logically expect each of the compilations to emphasize the books most likely to be used in its country;

it is not, therefore, surprising to find that Señorita Sabor states that she has devoted more attention to works in Spanish than to those in other languages and also to discover that she has covered Argentine publications rather intensively.

Since the above observations are general, it seems desirable to provide at this point somewhat more specific indications of the *Manual's* arrangement and contents together with such comments as seem called for. An introductory chapter, entitled "General Ideas and Theory of Reference," discusses some sources for the theory, technique, and organization of reference work, although the preface disclaims any intention of treating them extensively. Undoubtedly the problem of selecting material for inclusion here proved difficult, but on the whole it has been well done.

The first type of reference book to be discussed is the encyclopedia. A chapter tracing the history of encyclopedias precedes one presenting an annotated list of modern encyclopedias in the six languages receiving Señorita Sabor's attention. Following chapters repeat this pattern of the history of the given type of reference book, followed by the annotated list of current reference tools. Although the statement (p. 50) that the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* "is being constantly reprinted, rejuvenated, and kept up-to-date" carries perhaps a hint of the continuous revision policy, certainly a fuller explanation seems desirable, especially since the *Britannica* itself is cited as the 14th edition, 1929. This reviewer would also like to see *Collier's* added to the three encyclopedias in English (*Britannica*, *Americana*, *Chambers'*) which are listed.

Next come dictionaries. Those cited include the important compilations for the five major western European languages and for Portuguese, but bilingual dictionaries are restricted to those having Spanish as one of the languages.

Bibliography occupies the largest portion of the book (Chapters VI-XI), although the author has declared retrospective and subject bibliography to be out of scope. Following her usual approach, Señorita Sabor pre-

sents first the historical background, then in the following chapter enumerates bibliographies of bibliographies and universal bibliographies. Three chapters are devoted to national bibliography—the first to Spain and Latin America (except Argentina), the second to Argentina, and the third to the western European countries and the United States. This section concludes with a chapter devoted to bibliographies of serials and of government publications. All of these chapters, taken together, constitute one of the book's best features.

The final two chapters discuss other generally useful reference works—yearbooks and statistical sources in the first; sources for geography, history, literature, and unusual information in the second. In this connection it is interesting to note the inclusion of *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, but not of Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations*, presumably because the latter is completely in English.

By this reviewer's count there are 429 reference books discussed (excluding those mentioned only incidentally), distributed as follows:

Sources for the study of reference, 31; Encyclopedias, 41; Dictionaries, 49; Bibliographies, 151; Biographical compilations, 59; Yearbooks and statistical sources, 40; and, Works for general information, 58. This total represents over 50 per cent more titles than the 270 general reference works in Shores' *Basic Reference Sources*. Going one step further, one might compare some of the above figures with their counterparts in Shores—e.g., 49 vs. 60 dictionaries, 41 vs. 21 encyclopedias, and 59 vs. 18 biographical compilations. However, in view of the different purposes of the two volumes it appears that such comparisons have no particular significance.

In the appendix one finds lists of reference works for ten of the Latin American republics—Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Panama, Uruguay, Venezuela—and Puerto Rico, each prepared by a librarian from the country in question. This feature adds to the book's usefulness, in spite of the inevitable variation in the number and type of publications included in the lists themselves, and one regrets the lack of similar bibliographies for the remaining countries.

The work is well printed; in spite of citations in five languages the typographical errors are remarkably few in number. Titles, accompanied by full bibliographical information, are conveniently set off on the page, although there is no code numbering *à la* Winchell. The annotations give the special features as well as the strong and weak points of the works, while numerous (and accurate) cross references in the text encourage comparison with other books mentioned. Another interesting feature—sure to prove useful in Argentina, which lacks a national union catalog—locates copies of nearly all titles in one of nineteen libraries in Buenos Aires. The terminal date for inclusion is, with a few exceptions, December 31, 1955. Books are cited in the latest edition; this reviewer noted only two instances (save for encyclopedias) where the author failed to do so: *Ulrich's Periodicals Directory* (6th edition, 1951, rather than 7th edition, 1953—the 8th edition having appeared after the closing date) and the description of the original *Century Cyclopedia of Names* rather than the *New Century Cyclopedia of Names*, published in the spring of 1954. Since the later editions in both cases contain considerably more material than their predecessors, it is to be hoped that future printings will refer to them.

Frequent bibliographical footnotes—especially in the historical section—give additional sources (usually in Spanish), while a general bibliography at the end of the volume should be useful to readers wishing additional orientation in the field of reference service. An index facilitates reference not only to the individual books discussed but also to the historical material.

This book deserves—and will undoubtedly receive—widespread use in Latin American libraries and library schools. In this way it can contribute greatly to the development of reference service among our neighbors to the south. Moreover, American research libraries attempting to strengthen their resources for Latin American studies will find it a valuable compendium of the basic reference books of the countries in which they are interested. In short, Josefa Emilia Sabor has made a significant contribution to the literature of librarianship in Spanish.—*William Vernon Jackson, University of Illinois.*