

Civil War Dictionary

The Civil War Dictionary. By Mark Mayo Boatner III; maps and diagrams by Major Allen C. Northrop and Lowell I. Miller. New York: David McKay Company, Inc. [c. 1959]. xvi, 974p. \$15.00.

Current interest in the American Civil War is reflected at all levels of historical sophistication—in the casual interest of the general reader, in the battlefield-pacing interest of the full-fledged Civil War buff, in the specifically directed interests of students, and in the deep and inclusive research of scholars. It is unlikely to abate during the next six years, years which will see the centenary of the war commemorated in all manner of national and local celebrations. Colonel M. M. Boatner's *The Civil War Dictionary* will be of continuing use in answering library questions produced by any level of Civil War interest.

The Civil War Dictionary contains more than four thousand entries, over two thousand of them biographical. Maps and diagrams add considerably to its already considerable value. Although its scope includes all aspects of wartime life, its emphasis is very heavily military. The book is at its best in giving short, succinct accounts of Civil War battles. Next useful are its brief identifications of Civil War personalities, both Federal and Confederate.

While any book of this size and scope almost inevitably embraces a number of minor

errors in its text, such errors as have crept into *The Civil War Dictionary* are few and their presence is certainly understandable if not necessarily excusable. (And they should be excused in the book's first edition, at least.) The volume's faults should not be overemphasized as they are far outweighed by its virtues. It does, however, have limitations which should be understood by its users. Its coverage of civilian personalities is insufficient and haphazard. Its geographical entries are weak. It is based on a bibliography that is reasonably extensive but quixotic in what it includes and downright baffling in what it omits. Cross-references are woefully inadequate. Its arrangement—even its alphabetization—is individualistic rather than by accepted library practices. Much material is included in coverage of broad topics that is lost to the user searching for a particular heading.

The Civil War Dictionary is a good book. It will be particularly useful in libraries with limited collections of Civil War materials. Wisely used (and used in conjunction with such other books as Ezra Warner's *Generals in Gray*, Frederick H. Dyer's *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*, and Frederick Phisterer's *Statistical Record of the Armies of the United States*) it will be of value in almost any general library. Like many reference books, however, its values and limitations and the most efficient methods of using it must be carefully learned before the volume will concede its maximum usefulness.—Richard Harwell.

Comment

LC Catalog *Books:Subjects*

Is there any possible way that more college and research libraries can be encouraged to subscribe to the Library of Congress Catalog *Books:Subjects*? The current subscription list numbers about 365 as against 1,065 to the National Union Catalog. The price goes up almost every year because of

the few subscriptions and increased production costs. In 1950 I entered into a discussion on the lack of sufficient subscribers with officers at the Library of Congress and with the ACRL Executive Secretary.

We here at the Union Library Catalogue find ourselves in the embarrassing position of being the only library organization which could not live without *Books:Subjects*. This is because we do not have any foreign biblio-

graphical tools. The very nature of our requests is such that the *Books:Subjects* is the only way we can get at a large number of obscure items for which we are asked to find locations. For example, today we had a request for a book on hydrodynamics by one "Zhukovskii." The inquirer said it was published in 1949. A quick look in *Books:Subjects* located readily Zhukovskii, Nikolai E., *Sobranie sochinenii*. Moscow, 1948-1950. One of the seven volumes deals with hydrodynamics. There is absolutely no other tool which would answer this question quickly for us.

We feel that there must be literally hundreds of small college and research libraries which could make the same kind of use of this tool if they only knew how. Instead of an explanation of the kind of value which this tool does have, library literature is filled with lengthy critical reviews by learned ref-

erence librarians sniping at its inadequacy. From the large research library's viewpoint this may be quite true. But for the poorer and smaller institutions this is not so.

While we are aware of increased production costs all along the line, we are not in sympathy with an increase in price to meet these costs without some concerted effort on the part of the producer and the consumer to increase the sales. Is there anybody who cares about this situation? I ask these questions with the faint hope that there may be some kindred soul who would be willing to undertake to determine the use made of *Books:Subjects* by its subscribers. I suspect that little or no use is made of it by the large research libraries and that the smaller ones have not used their imagination to discover just how valuable it could be to them.—*Eleanor Este Campion, Director, Union Library Catalogue, University of Pennsylvania.*

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