

## Some Recent Bibliographies: One User's Perspective

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Volume 25, numéro 2, spring 1996

URI : [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad25\\_2re02](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad25_2re02)

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Éditeur(s)

The Department of History of the University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0044-5851 (imprimé)

1712-7432 (numérique)

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Citer ce document

Campbell, G. (1996). Some Recent Bibliographies:: One User's Perspective. *Acadiensis*, 25(2), 141–150.

## Some Recent Bibliographies: One User's Perspective

IN RECENT YEARS, *Acadiensis* has received review copies of a number of bibliographies. As editor, I have found these extremely useful and have been loath to give them up to a reviewer. Yet, because I have neither paid for nor earned them, I have been plagued by occasional pangs of guilt. This review is my response to that guilt as well as an introduction and guide to some recently published research tools. Since we do not normally review bibliographies in the pages of this journal, I have not felt compelled to include all of the bibliographies relating to Canadian history that have been published in the last decade, but have limited my examination to the eight sent to us for review. The bibliographies discussed here are a disparate group, produced for different purposes and with different users in mind. This review, then, makes no claims to comprehensiveness, but it does suggest the varieties of bibliographies currently available to historical researchers and considers some of the strengths and weaknesses of each.

What makes a good bibliography? In part this depends on the purpose for which the bibliography is intended as well as on the particular needs and background of the individual user. Annotated bibliographies can serve as useful introductions to a field, and provide the best starting point for research, in so far as they offer the uninitiated or novice user the informed and critical judgments of experts. More comprehensive and inclusive bibliographies are necessary in the second stage of serious scholarly research. At this stage researchers generally turn to the specialized bibliography. And at every stage a good index is a fundamental requirement of a good bibliography. Annotated bibliographies are meant to be used regularly, and scholars and university teachers, as well as serious students, will turn to a general bibliography again and again. Thus, while specialized bibliographies will be consulted as needed, usually in the reference sections of libraries, more general bibliographies, designed for routine and regular use, should be a manageable size and length. Presentation, then, becomes as significant as content in determining the success of such a bibliography, and the publishers of the bibliographies reviewed here were certainly mindful of such considerations.

M. Brooke Taylor, ed., *Canadian History, A Reader's Guide 1: Beginnings to Confederation* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1994) is an annotated bibliography, advertised, on its cover, as "an authoritative guide to Canadian historical writing...what is good and why". In the Preface, Taylor explains the general structure of the book: the chronological and regional organization, and the conceptual approach which provides the unifying theme. Readers can expect contributors to identify the basic reference works and journals and to "provide a selective, critical guide to the present state of scholarship in their respective fields. No two chapters are alike, but they all grapple with similar problems of legitimate subject matter and appropriate methodology" (p. xiii). According to Taylor, the chronological and regional structure of the volume says a great deal about the present state of scholarship relating to the pre-Confederation period (p. xiv).

Although the regional focus of researchers persists, the themes studied are common to all regions. Therefore, the potential for synthesis, or at least "for some

measure of cross-regional integration along thematic lines”, does exist (p. xiv). While the structure of the volume accepts the present regional bias of the historiography, chapter sub-headings and a subject index are “intended to help readers pursue themes across chapters” (p. xiv). Unfortunately, however, the subject index is the weakest part of this volume, including some quite esoteric headings — ‘Weights and Measures in New France’, for example — while subsuming other, very significant subjects under more general headings. Thus, while Native Peoples, are, quite rightly, listed individually, specific immigrant groups are subsumed under ‘Emigration’.

In designing this *Reader's Guide*, meant for students rather more than for professional scholars, accessibility of sources was a paramount consideration. Bearing this in mind, in the case of reprinted publications, the version cited was the one most likely to be available in the library of a small undergraduate university. For the same reason — accessibility — the editor discouraged contributors from citing unpublished sources, such as theses (p. xvi). An author index serves to make the volume accessible to those who are interested in studying historians as well as their subjects.

*Canadian History, A Reader's Guide 1: Beginnings to Confederation* is an invaluable revision and update of the 1982 edition,<sup>1</sup> long awaited and welcomed by university teachers and students alike. Inevitably, the chapters reflect the interests and approaches of the individual authors as much as they do the ‘state’ or direction of scholarship. Thus Bryan Palmer’s chapter on ‘Upper Canada’ includes ‘Social Differentiation’ (‘The Elites/ Artisans and Labourers/ Gender and Women’) as a separate category. Ian Ross Robertson, in his chapter on ‘The Maritime Colonies’, devotes nine pages to the historiography of Prince Edward Island, compared to just five pages for New Brunswick, seven for Nova Scotia and two for Cape Breton. Only James Lambert, the author of the chapter on ‘Quebec/Lower Canada’, follows conventions familiar from more traditional bibliographies in organizing his material, undoubtedly reflecting his training as an archivist.

Of course, the value of an annotated, critical bibliography, and this one is no exception, is in the slant and acuity of its contributors. The introductions, whether to a chapter, or to the major themes within chapters, should provide even the novice reader with some insights into the approach of the particular author. The contributors’ concluding summaries are even more useful, for they situate the historical themes within a historiographical framework, explaining developments in the field, evaluating the contributions made, pointing out broader implications and identifying current directions.

In the companion volume, Doug Owsram, ed., *Canadian History, A Reader's Guide 2: Confederation to the Present* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1994), the editor uses the preface to introduce the reader to Canadian historiographical writing, specifically, where to start if one wishes to achieve an understanding of Canadian historiography. He not only provides a useful summary

<sup>1</sup> D.A. Muise, ed., *A Reader's Guide to Canadian History 1: Beginnings to Confederation* (Toronto, 1982).

of the best writing on the history of historiography, but also identifies for students those few key articles about Canadian history "that are especially important in that they helped define the direction of the field over the years" (p. xii).

This is, as Owram points out, the third version of the *Guide to Canadian History*, and the first new edition in over a decade.<sup>2</sup> Although this edition involved a complete rearrangement and rewrite, the concept remains the same. Ideally the guide should offer a researcher "quick and easy access to the essential material in any subject area" (p. xiii). As with previous editions, this volume is "designed to be selective rather than definitive" (p. xiii). The authors charged with making the selections were chosen "not only for their knowledge but for their judgment" (p. xiii).

In terms of organizational structure, the differences between this guide and the last one, according to Owram, reflect the evolution of the field over the past decade. Thus, while the thematic chapters are retained, and the emphasis on regions is also generally maintained, two new fields — women's history and Native history — were deemed to have "developed sufficient scholarship and prominence to warrant their own chapters" (p. xiii). Owram claims that other topics were cut back to accommodate these additions, although this explanation is not entirely satisfactory. Taken together, the two new fields accounted for less than 50 pages, and this edition is 90 pages longer than its predecessor. So, it would seem that the two new fields were not the additions that necessitated merging the historiography of the Prairies, B.C. and the North into a single section, and one wonders whether slashing the coverage of these regions from 70 to 32 pages can really be justified.

The volume is enhanced by the individual authors' thoughtful introductions to each chapter, their useful commentaries on the sources cited and their concluding summaries, which often point to future directions suggested by current trends in the field. Obviously there are always minor disappointments, even in so useful a volume. As John Herd Thompson points out in the introduction to his chapter on 'The West and the North', "W.L. Morton's comment that 'the North has yet to be incorporated into the history of Canada' remains valid" (p. 339). This is aptly demonstrated by its inclusion in a chapter with the West. But historians of British Columbia and the Prairies, as well as of the North, cannot but wonder whether their status has somehow slipped over the past decade. And the editor of this journal cannot suppress a twinge of disappointment that Wendy Mitchinson, the author of the new section on 'Women's History', aside from citing one historiographical article, has overlooked, or perhaps dismissed, contributions to that field published in *Acadiensis*. Of course, journal editors should not too readily take offence. Undoubtedly, every contributor, like Andrée Lévesque, the author of the 'Quebec' chapter, was forced "especially in the case of articles", to make "ruthless choices...to respect the suggested length of the chapter" (p. 268).

Despite its limitations, this volume is a highly valuable resource for students and teachers alike. It is accessible not only because it is affordable, but also

2 The most recent being J.L. Granatstein and Paul Stevens, eds., *A Reader's Guide to Canadian History 2: Confederation to the Present* (Toronto, 1982).

because it provides knowledgeable and balanced introductions to a panoply of issues and themes. Nevertheless, students need a certain degree of flexibility and imagination if they are to make the most efficient use of this *Guide*. Although the index in this volume is somewhat more satisfactory than that of its companion volume, this reader would prefer a more comprehensive subject index at the expense of the author index, useful as the latter is. More significant, the section headings are, once again, idiosyncratic, reflecting the authors' varying approaches as much as the current trends. Thus, T.W. Acheson's is the only 'regional' chapter that includes a sub-section on 'Education'. Andrée Lévesque, in her chapter on Quebec, considers education both in the sub-section on 'Women and the Family' and in the sub-section on 'Cultural and Intellectual History'. David Mills, in the Ontario chapter, covers education in a sub-section labelled 'Social and Cultural History', while John Herd Thompson, embracing the Prairie Provinces, B.C. and the North, deals with education in his sub-section on 'Intellectual and Cultural history'. But this example exemplifies the volume's strength as well as its weakness, for students using it will soon recognize that the leading scholars in the field do not share a common approach and that the varieties of history they represent speak to the depth and the richness of the discipline.

As a bibliography, Jacques Rouillard, ed., *Guide d'histoire du Québec du régime français à nos jours : bibliographie commentée* 2e édition (Québec, Éditions du Méridien, 1993) belongs to the same genre. Indeed, according to Rouillard, this useful annotated bibliography was inspired by the two volumes of the *Reader's Guide to Canadian History* published in 1982, which were, by the time this project was undertaken, becoming rather dated. Also, because the earlier guides covered all of Canada, they could scarcely be comprehensive. Leaving the needs of specialist researchers to others, Rouillard and his collaborators sought to respond to the needs of college and university students and amateur historians. Like their colleagues in universities across the country, they found that their students tended to overlook works which are less accessible, particularly articles in scholarly journals. Thus one goal of the *Guide* was to improve the quality of student work by making such articles more accessible to them.

Not meant as an exhaustive or definitive list of titles but as "un choix de travaux reconnus pour leurs qualités ou leur caractère général", the purpose of this *Guide* is to identify for users "les meilleurs travaux, volumes ou articles, dans les principaux domaines de recherche en histoire, depuis le Régime français à nos jours" (p. 7). In preparing the *Guide*, Rouillard was joined by 17 collaborators, all leading specialists in their fields. The bibliography is divided into three parts, based on the traditional chronological divisions: the French Regime, the British Regime and Quebec since Confederation. Each period begins with a chapter devoted to general works. The remaining 15 chapters are organized around the principal fields of research in the history of Quebec. Each chapter begins with an introduction, outlining the state of research and identifying significant current trends.

Inevitably, the production of an affordable annotated bibliography requires the imposition of certain physical and methodological constraints. Although, in dealing with the historiography of a single province, Rouillard had more scope

than either Taylor or Owram, he, too, found it necessary to impose length limitations on his authors, forcing them to eliminate works they would have liked to include. And, seeking to point researchers to the most accessible works, they excluded, with a few exceptions, unpublished theses and works which had a limited circulation. From a methodological perspective, authors discovered that, for some fields, the broader chronological divisions had little significance (e.g., demographic trends, women and the family, religious history, among others). In such cases, it was sometimes deemed necessary to repeat titles which were clearly applicable under more than one heading, but the editor and authors tried to keep such repetition to a minimum (p. 9). Cross-referencing was the preferred method, sometimes in the text itself, but more often in the index. Thus, the thematic and chronological approaches do not fit together easily. This is the second edition of this very useful bibliography, and it provides an excellent supplement to the two volume *Canadian History, A Reader's Guide*. In this edition, the bibliography is updated and an author index is added. While the subject index is not altogether satisfactory, the Table of Contents is so detailed and the subtitles so precise that this seems a relatively minor flaw.

The majority of bibliographies are rather more specialized than those discussed to this point, and tend to strive for inclusiveness rather than seeking to provide a critical analysis of the sources listed. Some focus on a particular field, others on a particular region. Some are designed for a relatively wide market, others for the reference library.

Diana Pedersen, *Changing Women, Changing History: A Bibliography of the History of Women in Canada*, 2nd edition (Ottawa, Carleton University Press, 1996) not only demonstrates how far women's history in Canada has come, but reassures those interested in the field that we will not have to wait so long for updates as we did between the first bibliography in Canadian women's history, published in 1980<sup>3</sup> and the first edition of this bibliography, published by Green Dragon Press in 1992.<sup>4</sup>

That first edition, according to Pedersen, grew out of a project initiated "as a modest measure" to assist the undergraduate students in her Canadian women's history course (p. xii). From that modest beginning, the project mushroomed into an ambitious undertaking; the final result of which is the current very attractive volume. This second and "much revised" edition will be of extraordinary value to the audience it is meant to serve: "graduate students preparing fields in women's history or Canadian history, librarians besieged by student researchers, novice teachers facing their first introductory survey course, experienced teachers directing advanced students on unfamiliar topics and leading scholars preparing textbooks, grant proposals or reviews of the historiography" (p. xii).

In organizational structure, *Changing Women, Changing History* is set up as a

3 Beth Light and Veronica Strong-Boag, compilers, *True Daughters of the North: Canadian Women's History, An Annotated Bibliography* (Toronto, 1980).

4 Diana Pedersen, *Changing Women, Changing History: A Bibliography of the History of Women in Canada* (Toronto, 1992).

traditional bibliography. A Table of Contents divided into sections and sub-sections facilitates research. A subject index offers a more detailed list of entries which supplements rather than duplicates the entries in the Table of Contents: in fact the subject index **consciously does not duplicate** the entries in the Table of Contents. An author index provides the opportunity readily to identify the historians working in the field. A 'How to Use this Bibliography', directed at undergraduate students and general users, is clear and concise. The book is kept to a manageable size by excluding unpublished materials and by listing each item only once.

Rather too brief essays at the beginning of each section provide useful overviews, designed to introduce readers to scholarship in the particular sub-field, and to highlight the major themes and current directions. In general, the bibliography strives for comprehensiveness, and even scholars familiar with a field are likely to discover sources they did not know existed. Pedersen has conducted an exhaustive survey of scholarly journals and the breadth and depth of her coverage is impressive indeed. Nonetheless, it is a little surprising that the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* does not receive at least a passing nod. As a rare significant omission, however, this detracts only minimally from the value of this bibliography. Students and scholars will look to *Changing Women, Changing History*, and, one can hope, to Pedersen for regular updates, for many years to come.

Many bibliographies are cumulative. In such cases supplements, rather than entirely new editions, serve as updates. Gaétan Gervais, Gwenda Hallsworth and Ashley Thomson, eds., *The Bibliography of Ontario History/La Bibliographie d'histoire ontarienne, 1976-1986* (Toronto and Oxford, Dundurn Press, 1989), the successor to Olga Bishop's *Bibliography of Ontario History, 1867-1976*, serves just such a purpose. Yet although this bibliography can, on many levels, be considered a continuation of Bishop, and, indeed, is seen as such by the compilers, unlike Bishop's work, this volume includes references to the pre-Confederation era (p. ix).

Compiled mainly from the annual bibliographies of Ontario history developed by the same editors, this volume was produced for the Ontario Historical Society by the Institute of Northern Ontario Research and Development, a research arm of Laurentian University. In the production of this volume, the Institute offers concrete proof of its dedication to the development of "essential research support systems such as bibliographic guides, resource inventories and data bases, the lack of which presents serious obstacles to scholarly activity" (p. viii). This comprehensive bibliography will be welcomed by all researchers engaged in the study of Ontario's past, whatever their topic or field of interest.

A large and unwieldy book, it is clearly intended for the reference section of research libraries. As with most such bibliographies, an introductory user's guide outlines the general organization and explains how to find material by subject, author or editor. Its bilingual presentation, standard bibliographical format and author index ensure its ready accessibility for the experienced user. The carefully conceived Table of Contents, replete with detailed sub-headings, coupled with the comprehensive subject index, ensure that it will be equally accessible to the novice user. This is not to say that the organizational framework is without anomalies.

Users might well wonder, for example, whether 'Labour History' might not fit more appropriately under 'Social History' than under 'Economic History'. Yet such infelicities are rare. On the whole, this is a highly useful research tool that should be part of a standard reference collection in any academic library.

*A Bibliography of Canada's Peoples, Supplement 1: 1972-1979* (Toronto, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1993) compiled by Andrew Gregorovich and edited by Gabriele Scardellato, builds on Gregorovich's 1972 *Canadian Ethnic Groups Bibliography* and brings us one step closer to a comprehensive listing of "all publications, wherever they appear, that deal with individual groups or with some aspect of ethnic studies in Canada" (p. ix). A second supplement will cover the decade of the 1980s. According to Scardellato and Gregorovich, this bibliographical project was initiated in response to "the well-known principle that no serious scholarly project can be undertaken before a researcher has a firm grasp of the existing literature on the subject" (p. ix). Their goal is "to provide quick access for students and scholars" to the scholarly and popular publications relating to ethnicity, immigration, multiculturalism or some other aspect of ethnic studies in Canada (pp. xi-xii). This is an extraordinarily ambitious project, and the goal was to produce a volume that was as comprehensive as possible. Nevertheless, issues concerning size and manageability did dictate the necessity for certain editorial decisions. Thus, while popular material was included, some newspaper articles, as well as unpublished material, and all videos and films were excluded. The decision was also taken to eliminate the compiler's annotations, to supplement rather than to revise Gregorovich's earlier bibliography and to limit the period to works published prior to 1980.

Taken together, the two bibliographies completed to date comprise a valuable research tool. The standard bibliographical format will make the volume under review here readily accessible to researchers. The integrated author and subject index is extremely useful, although the subject index does not go beyond the Table of Contents in its individual entries. But even as this volume is published, users will be looking forward with some impatience to the next installment. For, while this bibliography is not exactly 'dated' given its provenance and purpose, scholars interested in doing serious research need to know what has been going on in the last decade and a half.

Interested in the literary history of Acadia and the Acadians, Marguerite Maillet, adopts a unique approach in her *Bibliographie des publications d'Acadie, 1609-1990: Sources premières et sources secondes* (Moncton, Chaire d'études acadiennes, 1992), listing not only authors and their works, but also the reviews of those works. Eschewing a traditional bibliographical approach on the grounds that others have compiled bibliographies of documents and of secondary sources on Acadians, Maillet drew her inspiration from the appearance of a bibliography of criticism of Quebec literature (pp. 12-13).

The bibliography itself consists of two distinct sections. The first, which is organized alphabetically by author, comprises a list of books and reviews of those books. In selecting authors and works, Maillet defined Acadian literature in the broadest possible way, including not only Acadian authors born in the Maritime Provinces, but also authors who have chosen to live in the Maritime Provinces and



to work in the Acadian milieu or for the Acadian cause, even if their books do not deal with Acadia; authors who have written books referring to or relating to Acadia; authors whose books were produced in the Maritimes by Acadian publishers; and, finally, authors whose studies provide insight or information judged indispensable for undertaking specialized research on Acadia. The second section comprises a bibliography of articles which deal with various aspects of Acadian literature, broadly defined. The bibliography is made more accessible by the inclusion of an alphabetical list of the authors of the books, a list of their works, arranged alphabetically by title, and an index of the authors of the articles cited.

This bibliography provides researchers with a solid foundation for the study of Acadian authors and their works. By her flexible approach to the definition of Acadian literature, Maillet has sought to stretch as well as to set the parameters of that field.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, despite the literary focus, this work undoubtedly will, as the compiler hopes, be of service not only to researchers, professors and students in literature, but to all those interested in Acadian studies whatever their discipline.

Another bibliography which is designed to identify a field of study and to promote research in that field is G. Blaine Baker, Kathleen E. Fisher, Vince Masciotra and Brian Young, *Sources in the Law Library of McGill University for a Reconstruction of the Legal Culture of Quebec, 1760-1890* (Montreal, Faculty of Law and Montreal Business History Project, McGill University, 1987). Begun as "a collaborative attempt by a group of McGill-based historians to compile a working bibliography of late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century sources of Quebec law" (p. 1), the result is an innovative research tool. As the project evolved, the collaborators settled on an unusual approach, deciding "to attempt physical reconstructions of law libraries rather than merely prepare lists of titles" (p. 1). McGill, which houses one of the oldest intact law libraries in central Canada, seemed a natural place to begin. First established in 1842, the McGill collection is invaluable, not only because of its breadth and depth, but also because many of the volumes include "extensive annotations, marginalia, signatures, and other insertions by pre-Confederation users" (p. 2).

A lengthy introductory essay situates the bibliography within a broader historical context, providing both a socio-economic overview of the history of Quebec and a survey of Quebec legal history for the period covered. Considering "legal history", broadly defined, as including "not only studies which attempt to delineate the changing internal structure of the law", but also those which "seek to understand the organic relation between law and society" (p. 19), this survey provides a useful historiographic guide to the major secondary works relevant to the period from the 1760s through the 1890s. The bibliography itself follows standard bibliographic practice and organization, with "topical categories and sub-categories...designed to facilitate access by contemporary researchers to [the] diverse

5 Especially when coupled with her earlier works: Marguerite Maillet, Gérard LeBlanc et Bernard Émont, *Anthologie de textes littéraires acadiens [1605-1975]* (Moncton, 1979) and Marguerite Maillet, *Histoire de la littérature acadienne. De rêve en rêve* (Moncton, 1983).

sources” available for the study of Quebec legal history (p.1). Unlike the standard bibliographies, however, this one has no index, leaving readers entirely dependent on a detailed Table of Contents. Nonetheless, in this coil-bound, modestly produced book, the compilers offer students and scholars an essential tool, one which will serve as both source book and manual, making the resources at the McGill Law Library readily accessible to researchers, and thereby serving to promote research in this field.

In this age of information technology — better known as IT by its leading promoters and proponents — when students and scholars alike are being prodded and seduced into dependence on CD Rom and the Internet for their bibliographical searches, are bibliographies in ‘hard copy’ — books, in other words — such as those discussed here, losing their relevance? For this author, a quantifier who has had a long and rewarding history of computer use, the answer is a resounding no.

On the one hand, the critical annotated bibliography, presented in an attractive and affordable format, is not yet threatened and, indeed, is destined to remain among the volumes considered essential to any professional historian’s personal collection. The general annotated bibliography, which identifies the most important works in a field or fields, provides the university teacher with ready advice to offer students and affords the seasoned, as well as the novice, researcher an easy, even if occasionally idiosyncratic, entrée to any number of historical topics. The specialized bibliography can be an equally useful tool in a personal collection. Certainly no one who teaches a course on Canadian women will want to be without *Changing Women, Changing History*.

On the other hand, comprehensive and cumulative bibliographies are most certainly at risk. Even librarians — those proverbial book-lovers — seem to be jumping on the CD Rom bandwagon. Cost and efficiency are the justifications most often cited in the campaign literature. Yet, to date, CD Rom versions of the major cumulative bibliographies remain very expensive. And what of efficiency? One can only hope that the most comprehensive bibliographies, often large, unwieldy, multi-volume cumulative series, will remain a part of the reference section of every university library, for browsing in an index remains, in the view of this researcher, a far more efficient way to locate books and articles on a particular subject than conducting a computer search using various combinations of ‘keywords’. Sitting at a desk or table, poring over a weighty tome, is surely more satisfying than sitting at a computer terminal, following the point and click method of doing the same subject search, trying to achieve the happy, but all too elusive, combination of keywords which will allow one to identify fewer than 500 and more than three sources.

There is something satisfying about a book in the hand, or, if it is a particularly large book, on the desk before one. The bibliographies discussed in this review are accessible for those who wish to do a specific and speedy topic search, but they will also reward patience and offer the pleasure of the unexpected discovery, a pleasure achieved more rarely in a computer search which demands precision and tends to the elimination of nuance. In short, despite vast computer experience in collecting and analysing statistical data, I remain something of a Luddite when it comes to certain kinds of research. In my experience, the results of CD Rom searches,

whether conducted by myself, by my colleagues or by my graduate and undergraduate students, are often disappointingly meagre when one considers the time invested. As for internet searches, I cannot but agree with the wag — a librarian I believe — who occasionally responds to a query on the H-Canada Discussion List with the citation requested, but also with the invariable accompanying admonishment: “Spend a couple of hours on the Internet and save a couple of minutes in the Library”.

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