

## Epitome of Newfoundland: The New Bibliography

William J. Kirwin

Volume 3, numéro 1, spring 1987

URI : [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nflds3\\_1re01](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nflds3_1re01)

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

### Éditeur(s)

Faculty of Arts, Memorial University

### ISSN

1198-8614 (imprimé)

1715-1430 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

### Citer cet article

Kirwin, W. J. (1987). Epitome of Newfoundland: The New Bibliography. *Newfoundland Studies*, 3(1), 120–129.

## REVIEW ARTICLE

# Epitome of Newfoundland: The New Bibliography

*Bibliography of Newfoundland*. Comp. Agnes C. O'Dea and ed. Anne Alexander. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, in association with Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1986. 2 vols. xx, 826, 827-1450 p. \$175.00.

WILLIAM J. KIRWIN

IF A SCHOLAR STUDIES a topic, seeks to increase understanding, or collects material for a planned publication, he needs to locate printed materials that supply background, facts, or commentary on the particular subject. The materials are in libraries and archives, and one of the tasks in getting a modern education is to become skillful in knowing what resources or "tools" a library offers to help the student locate any books and articles on his topic and track down the item that he needs to read. Card catalogs and bibliographies are the principal means of access to the needed materials. It is thus fortunate for researchers that the *Bibliography of Newfoundland* has recently appeared, both to save time in combing the catalogs of widely separated libraries and to display the sheer abundance of printed materials dealing with all aspects of the island and Labrador since the early Norse voyaged here in the eleventh century.

The bibliography is presented in two handsome volumes, with the first containing about two hundred more pages than the second. The tawny covers are adorned with two pictorial illustrations taken from nineteenth-

century periodicals, and the main bibliographical portions of the work have interleaved twenty-four reproductions of interesting title pages of works treated on nearby pages; these are not, however, listed in the introductory matter. Visually, the pages of the bibliography are attractive and legible, as with any exemplary reference work, enabling the reader to scan quickly. The main bibliography, presented in Volume I, is arranged in chronological sequence, with the year of original writing or publication of the assembled items identified toward the upper corners of the pages. Consequently the student can review the works relevant to, say, 1868 merely by referring to these dates. The author's or issuing institution's name is in bold black print, and each entry has a similar prominent item number by itself in the left margin, permitting quick location in the order sequence (from 1 to 5911), and of course facilitating the various sorts of cross-referencing which are indispensable in a bibliography. Beneath the author's name is definitive publication data for the particular book dealt with, in a very legible typeface, and pertinent notes follow in type of a smaller size. A sample entry provides these kinds of information (p. 287):

**1612b Gordon Henry, 1887-1971**

A winter in Labrador, 1918-1919, with a pref. by the Governor of Newfoundland: journal of the Rev. Henry Gordon, Cartwright, Labrador. [n.p., 19-?] 1 p.l., 3-79 p. 15.5 cm. M(msg.), P  
Sir Charles Alexander Harris was the Governor.

One notices that the author's full name, if known, is always given, no matter what names or initials or pseudonym appear on the title page, and the birth and death dates are provided (most of them probably based on the standardized United States Library of Congress catalog cards). The work's title is copied precisely from the title page in Library of Congress styling; in other entries further data may be derived from the verso page or the cover. The title here implies that the booklet appeared about 1919. (Many arbitrary decisions were made in the ordering of entries, one of which was that all later editions, versions, and reprints are placed immediately below the first edition, with letters added to the item number. The above entry follows 1612a, which was begun in 1915, and both appear on the "1914[-1915]" page. These editions after the first are not cross-referenced in their years of publication, so 1612b cannot be located by consulting the "1918" pages.)

The measurements of the item are indicated, and the amount of text, here seventy-nine pages. Locations in Newfoundland where the book is deposited are indicated by initials, which quickly become familiar:

M[emorial University] and P[ublic Libraries, of Newfoundland]. The location codes for other repositories in North America and Europe, of a sort conventionally used in professional bibliographies, are in Vol. I, xvi-xix. The final abbreviation, *msg.*, indicates that the University owned a copy of Gordon during the compilation of the bibliography but that this small booklet is missing or misplaced. The note explains more about "the Governor."

Volume I presents full bibliographical information about each included item. Volume II enables a researcher to locate a desired book if he does not know the year or approximate period when the first edition was written or published. The "Author Index" thus lists "Gordon," a short title of this work, and its item number, 1612b. It also includes, in alphabetical order, all other books in the bibliography authored by Gordon; another work, "Labrador parson," was edited in 1972 and is described at 1612a. The "Title Index" is helpful for any student who knows only the title of a work; "Labrador parson. 1972" and "Winter in Labrador. 19-?" indicate the two item numbers where complete information is presented. The "Subject Index," to be discussed again below, is not as cut and dried for one consulting the bibliography. "Labrador" is treated in its place at *L-*, pp. 1340-49, but also as a subheading under many other subjects, for example, "Geology." One must know Gordon's name to find his books under "Labrador," subtopic "Description." "Church History—Labrador" does not include Gordon, but has a cross-reference to "Missions," and in that category Gordon's publications are in the subdivision (Labrador). Gordon can be found also in "Social Life & Customs—(Labrador)." Perhaps all subject indexes demand considerable ingenuity and imagination to search, but this one is no doubt a good ingress if one does not wish to find a diary like Gordon's, but instead has a circumscribed topic such as "Dialect" (no category), "Language & Dictionaries," "Cartography," "Ballads" (no category), or "Folk-Songs" (under "Folklore"). Like many reference books and dictionaries, the "Subject Index" sets off the headings or categories in capital letters at the top of each page to permit the reader to search for topics, for example, AGRICULTURE to WOMEN.

By several avenues, then, the researcher can learn about possible descriptions of a needed book by going back and forth between the two volumes: the date of composition or publication; the author's or agency's name ("Gt. Brit. Parliament. House of Commons."); the title of the publication; and the general or specific subject area of interest.

A fourth section of the bibliography, entitled "Annuals," appears at the

beginning of Volume II. In this listing are presented titles which are not editions, pamphlets, or broadsheets—items—but series of publications issued periodically, usually by an organization. Their identifying number is preceded by A: A173. Annual reports, Christmas annuals, high school yearbooks, almanacs, and similar items are arranged alphabetically by title, and in many cases the author, title, and subject indexes also in Volume II will guide a reader to the desired series. *The Newfoundland Almanac* (A173), for example, can be found by consulting Templeman, Joseph (one of the compilers), Newfoundland almanac (the title), and “Almanacs See: Dictionaries Yearbooks.” The total number of entries under “Annuals” is 378.

The *Newfoundland Bibliography* in its present form is the product of many years of data collection, checking, organization, and editing. The history of the project, involving many cooperative individuals and institutions, is described with notable clarity in the “Preface” by Agnes O’Dea, and Anne Alexander, the editor, has added further material and specific details about the presentation of the indexes. The project was begun in 1955 and grew out of Miss O’Dea’s years of service with the St. John’s and University libraries. As the file of Newfoundland materials grew, so did the Newfoundland collections of the Memorial University Library. The bibliographer went further afield and sought Newfoundland references in numerous bibliographies and in the premier libraries in the British Isles, Europe, mainland Canada, and the United States. The swelling bibliography served as a guide for searching book catalogs and purchasing for the University’s Centre for Newfoundland Studies, established in 1964. At a certain point the slips and cards were converted to typescript and arrangements made with the University of Toronto Press for publishing the volumes we now have. All books published through 1975 were to be included, and editorial work after that year was devoted to checking and processing the entire run of entries. Except for final proofreading, the gigantic task begun in 1955 and before was effectively concluded almost thirty years later, in 1984.

The “Preface” records the criteria for what the bibliography should cover (ix), and the bulk of the entries are the printed and photocopied items, from multivolume works to single sheets, in some way related to Newfoundland and Labrador and their people. (Some materials concerning St. Pierre and Miquelon are listed.) The reader notices rare exceptions treated of in the bibliography, perhaps because they are in the Provincial Reference and Memorial Libraries and are useful research materials: a scrapbook of newspaper clippings (1702), manuscript census (255a), album of

photographs (941), motion picture (3683), musical score (3151), Eskimo translation (2287), typescript (2838) and reproduction of a typescript (1612a, 1642b), and tape recording (5447).

The major types of printed matter related to Newfoundland that are not covered in this reference work are newspapers, periodicals (except annuals discussed above), periodical articles, maps, and textbooks.

Another way of looking at the publication is to recognize that it is a bibliography limited to the materials, from the beginning up through 1975, in the major repositories and private collections in St. John's and to those elsewhere in the world that have come to the attention of the bibliographer. As a consequence, other, perhaps important, research materials exist in various major libraries, but chance has not brought them to light. A case in point is number 172, A. B. Keith's *Selected Speeches and Documents on British Colonial Policy 1763-1917* (1948). A scholar might want to know that this reprinted work is thirty years old and that, according to the British Museum Catalogue, the original work appeared in 1918.

Considering the massive amounts of detail in the bibliography, including several foreign languages (Eskimo, French, Welsh, Irish, Latin, Micmac, Dutch, Portuguese, Italian, Norwegian, Spanish, and German), it will require many specialists and constant users to discover the minor errors that appear in the text. Perhaps some of them are in the original book or pamphlet, and are therefore authoritative, but others could have cropped up in the transfer of data from slips to typescript, perhaps in the word-processing technology and output, and from mere oversight. My perusal revealed no major errors to list in this review, but students and scholars would be wise not to base their notes and bibliographies on entries in this generally unexceptionable compendium; the careful scholar always goes to the book, pamphlet, or government report itself. A trivial case concerns simple apostrophes. The following are the corrected forms: Rivingtons (601); Explorers Club, the most frequent form in the *National Union Catalog* (939); customs (1066); Teachers College is the official name (2887); townships' (A291-25). Since my own interests are language and humanities, it is obvious that other specialists, in history, social studies, and the sciences, will be needed to scrutinize entries in their own competences.

A useful exercise in surveying the bibliography was to compare entries with those in the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* (xxxv-lij), also arranged chronologically. Some omissions of the *Bibliography of Newfoundland* are esoteric ones, and others have perhaps been incorporated in the Centre for Newfoundland Studies since 1975. A very small number of

slight errors were noted in each bibliography.

Agnes O'Dea is forthright in her preface in asserting that "A bibliography is never . . . complete" (xiii). Additional items, not listed in this work, can be found by consulting the catalogs and indexes of the Provincial and University libraries but not in a convenient chronological organization. The majority of these will be the thousands of publications appearing since 1975. Nevertheless it is useful to call attention to certain types of publication, not included here, that will be gradually added to bibliographers' files and perhaps published in future addenda.

Ephemera and privately printed works are good sources to mine for additions to the bibliography. For example the following items are in private hands in St. John's: *Speech of the Honorable Robert Bond, Premier, On the Bill to Amend the Railway Contract of 1898. Delivered Monday, July 22nd, 1901*, 8 p.; [*Manifesto of the Hon. R. A. Squires, K.C., Leader of the Liberal-Reform Party. St. John's, October 10th, 1919*], 32 p. In the *British General Catalogue of Printed Books*, the following was noticed: Thomas (John) R.C. *Bishop of St. John's, Newfoundland. To the Clergy and Faithful of the diocese [sic] of St. John's, Health and Benediction in the Lord. [A letter.] [St. John's, Newfoundland, 1857.]* (The reference is to Bishop Mullock.) An easier task is filling the gaps with details on earlier and later editions. Jack Turner's *Buddy's Blighty* (1978) had an earlier edition in 1917 [Halifax: Imperial Publishing Company Limited], 29 p. (private collection). Both the *General Catalogue of Printed Books* and the *National Union Catalog* of the Library of Congress can be systematically collated with the bibliography for works up to the early twentieth century and useful publication history filled in: the *National Union Catalog*, for example, lists other editions of Robert Lowell's *New Priest in Conception Bay* (630) published in Boston (1864) and New York (1869). In this fashion the immense scope of Newfoundland publications will gradually become clearer.

Cross-reference in a bibliographical work can doubtless be multiplied considerably if there are no limits to time and money. As I progressed through the bibliography, I frequently added such references useful for my own studies and perhaps for other consulters: one cannot remember all interconnections without visible reminders. A very valuable one should be inserted at 309 looking forward to 1616. David Buchan's reports are not widely reprinted, and the first is in John Barrow's *Chronological History of Voyages* (1818), a rare work. The second item is J. P. Howley's readily available compilation on *The Beothucks, or Red Indians*, and it contains the Buchan account in Barrow and in addition Buchan's report on his se-

cond expedition in 1820. A number of cross-references now appear in the annotations, so a fine start has been made. Among those in the "Subject Index," I feel the following might have been included: Annuals, Autobiography, Labrador and St. Pierre (under "Cities . . . Regions"), Emigration, Eskimos, Family Names, Governors, Miquelon, "Pilots," that is Pilot Guides, Periodicals, Place Names, Sailing Directions, Seals and Whales (under "Mammals"), Trees, Unions, Who's Who. The rationale for these suggestions is that the bibliography should be designed to be advantageous for the layman and the neophyte, as well as for the seasoned librarian working with book collections every day.

With this in mind it must be said that a subject index is primarily a professional's tool. Its organization and complexity cannot be cracked in an hour or two of skipping from category to category. Like many other printed references tools, it needs to be used frequently so that its rich resources become easily accessible for the researcher. In order to realize this aim, an introductory one-page scheme listing the categories, sub-categories, and cross-references would be a distinct aid for the student desiring to see at a glance the scope of the index and to find a topic quickly.

Nothing that I have read in the last decade has made a point of criticizing the staggering increase in abbreviations, acronyms, and initialisms in edited English. The result of this trend, in my view, is that informative prose is more and more aimed at distinctive in-groups that know what the referents for these abbreviations are, and outsiders can remain in their ignorance if they will not work at the task of deciphering the codes in capital letters. Abbreviations put a burden on the reader if, in each new article he examines, he must look back to refresh the memory as to what that G, NWS, or ASCOT refers. In linguistic terms, redundancy has been reduced, and successful communication has been made less sure.

The *Bibliography of Newfoundland* is in line with this unfortunate fashion. The abbreviations, which save space and money, are of two kinds. The first, internal to the bibliography, are the abbreviations used in the bibliographical descriptions of the main entries. Two of these are explained in the preliminary discussion of Volume I (p. msg, p. xvi), and the source library symbols for North American and overseas institutions are fully described on xvi-xix. No other abbreviations in the two volumes are translated. I guessed that *extr.* meant 'extract,' but am mystified by *col.* (1670), *part. fold.* (1759), *part. ports.* (1647).

The second type of abbreviation is of the sort known and used by modern organizations as a familiar shorthand. These perhaps will leave most non-



specialists in the dark. The argument against pervasive reliance on the initialisms of bureaucracies in a *printed* work is that the book remains fixed and the institutions may change their official names. Do all readers immediately translate, out of context, the obsolete initialisms AEF and ETO? Furthermore initialisms in a work for an international readership cannot be readily understood by foreign readers.

This, I feel, is a major problem for the editors of the bibliography. They might have given a few pages to abbreviations: DAR (1456), CJ (1622), MC and GCMG (1678), DSIR (1762), BSAX (2270), ARP (2484), BMI (3333), ARDA Division (3845), AIC Winspear (4138), MSRL (4702), SEDCO (4703), BPS Exhibitions (4939), DREE (5196), IBY Grant (5361), NLC (5537), and AGORA (5634) are a fraction of the abbreviations which were noted.

The value of the *Bibliography of Newfoundland*, despite the necessity of alternating between related materials in two volumes, lies in the abundance of information handily located on one's shelves rather than scattered in institutions in Newfoundland and more distant research centers. Already I can perceive that it will save days of searching in the research projects I have undertaken. As the compiler states (xi), the chronological organization has many advantages in illustrating the evolution and relationships of the stages of the written record in Newfoundland. A historical framework is a useful one for many researchers in the older periods. But since full details are given for each work, and detailed annotation for many titles, the work has various additional benefits besides information on authors, titles, and locations. With a change of focus, one notices, for example, a wealth of evidence on language in the historical development of the colony and province. More information on "sack ships" has come to light, and also interesting usage of scientists in the forest industries, forms of plurals in the fisheries (*herring* and *squid*, but *seals* and *whales*), the competition between "fish" and *codfish*, etc. The bibliography describes many biographies, journals, and fictional accounts by native Newfoundlanders who may unwittingly have set down valuable cultural and dialectal details in their accounts, details of the sort that can be distorted and corrupted by the imaginative visiting journalists who put Newfoundlanders in their stories and novels. Surely other specialists (and generalists) will, in similar fashion, be led to numerous little-known authors, books, and topics related to their research activities.

In fine, the *Bibliography of Newfoundland* is a rare luxury. O'Dea stated in her preface that in 1955 when the bibliography was initiated the American and British union catalogs had not been printed (x). Since that

period, technological change has been rapid in university libraries that are forced to adapt to new developments. Microfiche and catalogs on film are coming to supersede drawers of cards. The *National Union Catalog* stopped publication in 1978 and for books after that date is now only available on microfiche. It should not be too long before the video display terminals of the cataloging departments are also standard equipment for public users of libraries.

Just possibly, this fine, sturdy reference work for the earlier centuries of Newfoundland has come at the right time in the flux of technological development. Researchers do not have the copious and presumably authoritative bibliographical data on screens or symbol-sprinkled printouts, only economically available from the library's computer. Instead we readers have the fruits of the long years of careful collecting by the compilers and the generous composition of the University of Toronto Press. We are in their debt.