

BOOK REVIEW

Directory of Indian publishers. Editor, Dinkar Trivedi. New Delhi, Federation of Publishers and Booksellers Associations in India, 1973. xvi, 592p. Rs. 50. [Reviewed by B. Guha]

That there is a genuine need, both within and outside the country, for a comprehensive directory of Indian publishers cannot be over emphasised. Even though the need has been often expressed by librarians, bibliographers, booksellers and others, yet, like the proverbial complaints about the weather without trying to do anything about it, such a directory has remained a wish only for so long. It is gratifying to note that the Federation of Publishers and Booksellers Associations has come forward to help us in this matter. That the Federation has received financial help from the governments of India and the United States, in the production of the volume, signify the enormous importance of the venture.

The Directory has listed 10, 250 commercial publishers and 900 corporate bodies. It also lists 900 'book industry adjuncts', in which category comes book designers, book exporters, book industry associations, book importers, book printers, book review media, book trade journals, foreign publishers agents, literary awards and prizes, and paper mills.

Section-1 is devoted to the listing of 'Private sector' publishers, which, for obvious reasons, fills up the bulk of the publication - running to 390 pages. The publishers are listed alphabetically under the language groups. The language groups are also placed alphabetically - from Assamese to Urdu (fifteen languages in all). Under each language group, publishers are listed in two separate categories - the first category seems to be of publishing firms, although no name has been given, and the second category lists 'author publishers'.

Section-2 deals with public sector and corporate publishers. They are listed separately under the following headings: academies, C. S. I. R., I. C. A. R., I. C. M. R., learned societies, Manager of publications, miscellaneous governments, museums, state governments, and universities.

Section-3 is a list of book industry adjuncts in separate categories like book designers etc, as mentioned earlier. Apart from these Sections which form

the main part of the directory, a Geographical Index has also been provided to enable a user to refer from a place name.

All that have been said above give an idea of the scope, coverage, and the organisation of the directory. Surely, they sound quite impressive too. But the present reviewer was amazed to find the enormous amount of inaccuracies and mistakes that have gone into the span of about 600 pages. Mistakes are there on every count - in the classification or categorisation of publishers, in the presentation of information in the entries, in the alphabetisation of entries, in abbreviation, in spelling, and in fact in everything. The foreword, written by the President of the Federation, and also the publisher's blurb reveal that the directory is based on the 'research data' collected by its Editor over a period of thirty years. It is disheartening that this enormous effort on the part of the Editor could not prevent the ugly mistakes from coming into print.

As has been said earlier, the private sector publishers have been grouped under 15 language categories. In all categories, except in Urdu, there are two sequences - first publishing houses and then the author publishers. This simple classification, however, is also not very convincing. There appears to be some inaccuracies. As for example, in the language group, Bengali one finds such names as Bandhab Pathagar, Bimsa Satabdi, Chotader Jagat, Tapendrasmiri Asar, Biplabi Komiunist and many more as author publishers. Those who can understand the meaning of the above terms will be amused. At the same time publishers like Biswajnan, Rupasi Bamla, etc are mentioned both as publishing houses and also as author publishers. Naturally, one would doubt the very basis of this classification. Apart from this, the information given in the entries are just the name and address only in most cases. In some cases some additional information like the number of publications in print and names of proprietors, directors, editors etc of a firm are also available.

The Section-2 devoted to public sector and corporate publishers contain many more inaccuracies, some of them are real howlers. In page 410, entry no. II LS 370 (devoted to learned societies) gives the most amusing information that the Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre, from where the present reviewer is functioning, is located in Lucknow

and its Director is Dr S H Zaidi ! Surely, it is to be seen to be believed. But it is there. The facts are: the institution is not a learned institution, is also not located in Lucknow and Dr Zaidi is also not its director. The information supplied is actually for the Indian Toxicology Research Centre.

Within the groupings of Academies, C.S.I.R., I.C.A.R., I.C.M.R., and Learned Societies there are lot of mistakes. A number of C.S.I.R. laboratories has been shown under I.C.M.R. and Learned Societies. The C.S.I.R. itself finds a place only under the Learned Societies. Similarly, some of the C.S.I.R. laboratories like the Indian Institute of Experimental Medicine, Indian Institute of Petroleum, INSDOC, etc are under Learned Societies and a few others are shown under I.C.M.R. On the other hand, institutions like the National Atlas Organisation, National Dairy Research Institute, National Sugar Institute, etc come under the C.S.I.R. list. Under the group Learned Societies, all conceivable societies, institutions, associations have come. Thus, we find Federation of India (sic) Chambers of Commerce and Industry, National Dairy Research Institute, Press Information Bureau, Structural Engineering Research Centre (a C.S.I.R. laboratory), Union Public Service Commission, University Grants Commission and many more under this group. A number of institutions have been mentioned more than once either under the same group or under different groups.

The other groups under the Corporate Bodies are also not free from blemishes. First of all what is mentioned in the contents page are not available in the text. As for example, in the contents page entries II M1 751 to II M1 762 are given to 'Other outstanding government publishers' but in the text (page 428), the same entries are given to 'Miscellaneous - Government'. It is really intriguing to find a number of short entries under the group 'State Government's' (page 431). Who is going to be helped by such entries as Director of Ayurved, Director of Port, Charity Organisation, Motor vehicles, Miscellaneous, and a host of others, without any further information. Taking, for example, the last item mentioned above, does the 'research-minded' editor wants to convey that there is a Department of Miscellaneous' in every state? If not why at all such entries.

The catalogue of errors is, no doubt, becoming longer. It would be suffice to say that one can stretch it to any length one desires. Printing errors have added to the general confusion designed by the editor of the directory. Beginning from the very first page of the Preface where one faces the line 'The directory, is devised' to the last page where one comes across such odd place names like Race Bareli, Madia, Hoogly, there are innumerable printing mistakes. In fact, there are only a few pages which will be free from some form of typographical errors. In some places the errors make the entries really amusing. Thus, there are 'S. Dharan Brahmo Samaj' (for Sadharan), Indian Dairy Science Association (for Dairy), Annual Husbandry & Dairy Department (for Animal), etc.

Above all, it must be said, the objective of a directory of this type should not be merely the collection of names and addresses of publishers. If a user wants to find out which are the Indian publishers who specialise in medical publications, or children's books, or art publications, or scientific periodicals, or bibliographical publications, etc, then a well conceived directory should be able to provide appropriate approach to such information. But the present directory cannot be used for such purposes. Since, the Federation of Publishers and Booksellers Associations in India is associated with this compilation, it projects a very poor image of the entire book trade in our country.

The editor has rightly concluded his preface by saying "A directory like the present one, is never completed... as a directory is a continuous process". The Federation should take up the work of the next edition immediately. They would do well to take into confidence a major group of users, that is the librarians, for better design and presentation of the next edition.

Book selection, by Benoyendra Sengupta, with a foreward by Niharranjan Ray. Calcutta, World Press, 1974. xiv, 207p. Rs.25 or \$ 5.25 or £ 1.80. [Reviewed by B. Guha].

Benoy Babu is no stranger to the library world. He is known to many more through his writings. A book by him on a subject of such general interest as book selection will be well received by librarians.

That there is no dearth of books, even excellent books, on book selection has been granted by the author. Hence, the justification for the present publication, as given by the author, is for gathering together in a handy volume 'the current trends, problems and the conclusions of surveys conducted in recent years in developed countries of the world in this area of basic professional operation' and tailoring all these for Indian conditions. Such objectives, it would be admitted, are laudable for any new publication.

This handy volume has six chapters in all, supported by a brief index. The present reviewer finds in it an attempt to provide mainly two aspects of study. One aspect is the discussion of the principles and problems of book selection and the other aspect is the presentation and annotation of the various types of book selection tools and references.

The first part dealing with the principles, mainly the first three chapters, is an able summarisation of our accumulated wisdom on this aspect of book selection. The expression 'summarisation' is intentionally used. In almost every page one finds long quotations from Drury, Haines, McColvin, Wilson and others. This naturally gives the idea that one is reading a summary of what others have said. There are many students and librarians who

are prepared and eager to hear what Benoy Babu has to say. This group will be disappointed. What is more disturbing is the early revelation, as one goes through the pages, that the author has not kept one of his early promises. One is unable to find anything which resembles 'the current trends, problems and conclusions... in recent years'. In other words, the author has hardly given any recent information or recent rethinking on any aspect of book selection. The documents that are mentioned as references at the end of chapters also point out this fact. Most of them are quite old publications.

The other aspect of the book i.e., introducing the various book selection tools and aids is not at all a competent and dependable guide. Here again most of the traditional old tools are cited to the exclusion of more recent tools. Thus, among the tools and bibliographies mentioned under Natural Sciences and other subject headings (p. 154-55), one does not find Jenkins' compilation. For Nuclear Physics, a bibliography of 1955 is recommended and similarly for Aeronautical Sciences, Geology, Geophysics, Zoology, the latest 'closed bibliographies' that are suggested do not go beyond 1958. Coming under the heading 'Useful arts' one is shocked to meet the title, Index Medicus whereas this tool is not mentioned under the more specific heading Medicine.

Coming to bibliographies and lists of periodicals (p. 161-72) one can easily measure as to how far the information content is out-dated. The author very honestly mentions that the list of tools provided there is based on another work which was published in 1968. As a consequence quite a few new tools must have been missed. Perhaps, due to this dependence, even an Indian tool, viz. the Directory of Indian science periodicals, published by INSDOC is shown to have been published in 1964. The next edition of the same directory which was published in 1968 and also other directories in the field e.g. Gidwani and Navlani's directory, have all been completely missed by the author. Similarly, under Biological Sciences and Medicine, lists of periodicals published in 1955 and 1957 have been mentioned. One wonders how such out-dated lists would be of any help to any librarian for acquisition of periodicals.

In the same chapter, the reviewer found two definite mistakes. The Bibliography of scientific publications of South and South East Asia has been given an open entry (p. 147). The publication had actually ceased in 1964. The Insdoc List is shown to have been published from 1954 to 1960. This

publication actually continued till 1965. Above all, one would wonder why at all these two publications are mentioned in a list of book selection tools.

The author has given some importance to a category of documents which is attaining very great importance in recent years i.e., translations. But, here again some out-dated lists and publications are mentioned (p. 178-79). There is no mention of publications like Translations Register-Index, World List of Translations, Transatom Bulletin, etc. nor agencies like NTC or ETC. To find details about cover-to-cover translations, one is referred to two old lists of D.S.I.R. and the Library of Congress.

Himmelsbach's list finds no mention here. The Commonwealth Index of Unpublished Scientific and Technical Translations is mentioned to be maintained by Aslib. This is true. But when one of the stated objectives of the author is to tailor information for Indian conditions, could it not be said that the Indian copy of this Index is maintained by Insdoc? Another mistake is again made by calling this Index a publication. This Index is actually maintained in card form.

Printing errors abound in the publication. In the very first page the eye falters on 'collection'. Drury's Book selection is said to have been published in 1330. Errors in some abbreviated words have been more damaging. For example, one finds Catalogue of I.S.I.R. publications (may be for C.S.I.R.) in page 175, U.K.N.L.A. Bulletin (perhaps for N.L.L.) in page 168 and so on. In fact in a book published in September 1974 one would expect to find its new name i.e. B.L.L. But it is not there.

Attention has been drawn by the author specially to a chapter devoted to "Libraries and the book trade in India", which may be useful to Indian librarians. The present reviewer made some efforts to locate the chapter and it was discovered that the chapter is actually entitled "Problems relating to book order". However, the contents of this chapter also do not elevate the publication very much. The chapter ends with a long paragraph on ISBN which is taken from Harrod's Glossary.

From what have been said so far, it would appear that the author has not produced in the publication what he promised. There is neither "the current trends, problems etc." nor any special orientation towards Indian conditions. Benoy Babu, the reviewer believes, could produce both of these if he had only made a serious attempt.

