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FLYER BY NIGHT: A CAUTIONARY REVIEW

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Bio-rhythms, Biological Clocks and Periodicity: Index of New Information with Authors & Subjects. Preston G. Parke. ABBE Publishers Association of Washington, D.C. Washington, D.C. 1996. \$49.50

The flyer piqued our interest: a hot topic that students were trying to find pre-packaged for their reports and essays. One hundred and sixty pages full of the most recent articles on bio-rhythms -- with index. A reasonable price, for this day, was demanded. The book was ordered, cataloged, prepped and placed on the new books for reference truck. Twenty minutes later, the book had been withdrawn and a note made in the accession records to never purchase from the publisher again. We had been burned by a vanity press.

The dark world of self-publishing is rarely discussed. I looked into Wilson's *Library Literature* and could find little information. I remember a few warnings in passing from a professor in collection development class back in library school. The odd little flyers that land in a reference or collection development librarian's in boxes with the ever so intriguing titles in their back lists are usually tossed out quite quickly. Beware! Ignoring such a policy can result in costly and embarrassing mistakes.

I hardly know where to begin in the description of this book. There are so many things wrong with it, it could be used as an excellent weeding tool -- if the book you are evaluating comes close to this one, throw it out. Check your collection; if you have any of the 830 titles from this publishing house throw them out, too. I have examined half a dozen of the titles -- I got them through inter-library loan. They all come up to the extremely low standards of Dr. Parke's work and ABBE Publishers output. World Cat was searched to find other libraries that held works from this press. A surprising number turned up! Most of the holdings were for books published in the mid and late eighties.

The best thing that can be said about this reference work is that half the pages are blank. In fact, the first draft of this review was written on the verso of page 42. According to the “Professional Information” pages – of which there are two – one in the front and one in the back -- this is “because of demands for generous spacing and allotments to permit research physicians, scientists and pioneers to insert their notes, discoveries, lab work and new references.”

Two tables of contents, two pages of “Professional Information,” thirty pages of a catalog of other works available from ABBE, three pages of new editions, two prefaces, a dedication, a prologue, a ranting introduction, and an epilogue are used to pad this undigested accumulation of 162 miscellaneous citations. This format seems to be the specialty of this strange publisher. All the other works from ABBE I examined had them, some even had execrable line drawings. For a good laugh borrow this book from somebody else -- do not buy one yourself! The prologue and the introduction are priceless.

I hesitate to call this a bibliography. There is no focus; this bibliography and its index would not be acceptable from a rank beginner at any college or university. The citations run an amazing, but shallow, gamut – from cows to drosophila to female airline attendants to male Eld's deer. Almost all of the citations are from 1994. Citations are arranged alphabetically, apparently, letter by letter, since there are twelve items beginning with “the!”

The indexing, which occupies more pages than the bibliographic citations, obviously meeting the “demands for generous spacing,” is by simple keyword . There are no entries under “the.”

This book comes nowhere near meeting any researcher's need for information on the subject of biorhythms. I would not recommend that *any* library purchase this or any other opus from ABBE Publishers. I can get a blank book that would be more useful at the local bookstore for \$14.95; the tome in question costs \$49.50! I can also do some very quick searches on any number of databases and gather 161 miscellaneous citations in about 15 minutes -- less time if I don't try too hard.

Well, flame off for now! Next up-- Somerset Publishing.

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