

ALAN R. EAGER. — *A Guide to Irish Bibliographical Material: A Bibliography of Irish Bibliographies and Sources of Information*. Second revised and enlarged edition. London: The Library Association, 1980. Pp. xv, 502.

However one defines "the Irish Question", Alan Eager's mammoth new bibliography is a welcome guide to studying its many and perplexing contours. Eager, who is librarian of the Royal Dublin Society, published an earlier edition of this work in 1964. It was the first effort to compile a general bibliography of Ireland. The present edition contains 9,517 entries, about three times the number of its predecessor, arranged roughly on the Dewey Decimal Classification.

Be one's interest bog flows, coleoptera, hagiography or poultry, the student of Ireland will find references on everything from divining to distilling in this expansive listing. Reading entries, item by item, is instructive in several respects. One not only discovers valuable and obscure sources such as unpublished library catalogues, but also begins to acquire a sense of the preoccupations of Irish scholars and antiquarians. It is no accident, for instance, that "science" receives only about thirty-seven percent more space than "religion".

Criticizing a bibliographic work is all too easy. Academics frequently rationalize activities like bibliography and indexing as technical and unintellectual — something to be left to librarians, editors and research assistants. This affected condescension is often only a feeble excuse for sloth. In view of this deplorable situation, one should perhaps accept with unquestioning gratitude any research tool that appears, especially in a field where there are few enough "watering holes". Even the dilettante of Irish studies soon discovers the dearth of basic research tools.

Despite his commendable effort, Eager's work too has some faults and these must be ignored. Here I should add that my perspective in this review is mainly historical but a number of the following comments apply equally to other fields of Irish study. Eager states in his introduction that the bibliography "should serve as a starting point for all who are engaged in research work in Ireland" and that "[i]n attempting to cover so broad a canvas it was impossible to specialise". Here, I think, the compiler is unduly modest. He often includes very specialized items. Consider, for example, entry number 3055: "BLAKE, MARTIN J. A map of part of the county of May in 1584; with notes thereon, and an account of the author [John Browne], and his descendants. *Galway Arch. Hist. Soc. J.*, 5, 1907-8, 145-58." The more thorough, the better!

The bibliography's fundamental enigma, however, is Eager's imprecise definition of criteria for selection. Superficially the work's perimeters seem distinct: catalogues, bibliographies, periodicals and indexes; he also includes unpublished material, work in progress and other primary sources, along with "standard or representative" non-bibliographical works which provide "balance". And under "Abbreviations" one can see, as well, the impressive list of periodicals Eager consulted. The whole process of selection *seems* clear enough, but careful examination of the bibliography shows that these guidelines permit, and perhaps require, a good deal of very arbitrary choice on the part of the compiler.

Researchers and readers will no doubt quibble with some of Eager's inclusions and omissions. For example, the oldest entries are only a few late eighteenth-century publications. The sections on architecture, biography, local history and manuscripts, to single out some of the better categories, are particularly useful, but the few titles under government documents, directories and the Irish abroad are disappointing. The listing under genealogy, long a preoccupation of the Irish and one of the few cogent promotional lines left to the Irish tourist industry,

is very good. It soon becomes clear that although Eager consulted many periodicals, he culled articles according to personal and loosely defined criteria — again the classic dilemma of the bibliographer.

Potentially as problematical as the compiler's mode of selection could have been his classification of some items. For instance, Ruth Dudley Edwards' *Atlas of Irish History* (London, 1973) appears under "History: General", not "Historical Geography". A few titles in the bibliography appear more than once but most have only one entry. A further complication is the fact that the table of contents gives an oversimplified view of the volume's complex organization. Fortunately, use of the two detailed indexes, one by author and the other by subject, will efficiently negate most classificatory problems.

One cannot, however, help noticing other irregularities. Eager examined the principal repositories in Dublin and the holdings of the British Museum, and wrote to librarians of other major Irish institutions. He also relied on correspondence when gathering information on special Irish collections in England and the United States. This method, although perhaps the only feasible one, was not infallible. For example, Eager lists the late Albert E. Casey's published fifteen-volume collection of sources on counties Cork and Kerry, yet overlooks the valuable inventory of Casey's personal library: Georgia V. Fleming-Haigh, comp., *Ireland: The Albert E. Casey Collection and Other Irish Materials in the Samford University Library; An Annotated Bibliography* (Birmingham, Alabama: Samford University Library, 1976) reviewed in *Families*, 20 (1981), p. 368.

I shall cite just a few more, small peculiarities of Eager's bibliography. In the introduction he notes the inclusion of "Bibliographies printed in Ireland, but which are not Irish in character". This decision seems unusual in such a massive undertaking where space was obviously a consideration and some items therefore had to be excluded. Perhaps even more surprising are Eager's errors in listing Edith M. Johnston's short but useful annotated publication sponsored by The Historical Association (London) and entitled *Irish History: A Select Bibliography* (# 8170). Eager not only mistakes the initial date of publication as 1969, instead of 1968, but also overlooks the revision of 1972. Eager omits as well some American periodicals of Irish interest; he even fails to list the first edition of his *Guide* (which although partially redundant in content would at least have had bibliographical interest). Finally, although the work of Rosemary Ffolliott, editor of *The Irish Ancestor*, is cited throughout the bibliography, its compiler incorrectly and inexcusably gives her surname as "Ffolliott". Eager might have used the modern form of capitalization (i.e. Ffolliott) instead of the traditional (i.e. ffolliott), but "Ffolliott" is hopelessly wrong. Surely it is obvious that Miss ffolliott, an authority on Irish genealogy, would not permit her name to have appeared incorrectly in her own journal for the past thirteen years.

These criticisms are obviously far from damning. For a work of its size and scope, *A Guide to Irish Bibliographical Material* is remarkably free from flaws. Moreover, this handsome volume serves as a welcome companion to the late Dr Richard J. Hayes' monumental *Sources for the History of Irish Civilisation*, a superb multi-volumed, ongoing index of manuscripts and periodicals. In spite of the prohibitive price of Eager's bibliography, one can only rejoice at the publication of this highly legible and usable reference work, and applaud its tireless compiler.

But in the long run, perhaps two other considerations are more important. The appearance of such a comprehensive work reaffirms the fact that any realistic attempt to understand and solve "the Irish Question" necessarily involves the whole island; at least academics can dare to look beyond the artificial barriers

of politics. Eager's bibliography is also a useful instrument for gauging the state of Irish studies. I shall leave that task to the reader, adding only that, financial considerations aside, Irish scholars need not dread unemployment for some time.

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WERNER PARAVICINI. — *Die Nationalbibliothek in Paris. Ein Führer zu den Beständen aus dem Mittelalter und der Frühen Neuzeit.* Préface de Georges Le Rider. Collection «Dokumentation Westeuropa», Band 5. München, K. G. Saur Verlag, 1981. 133 p.

Destiné aux chercheurs étrangers, particulièrement allemands, tant médiévistes que modernistes, ce guide de la Bibliothèque nationale fera le bonheur de nombreux chercheurs de la communauté scientifique internationale, bien au-delà des frontières de l'Allemagne. L'ouvrage est divisé logiquement suivant les différents départements de la BN: livres imprimés; périodiques; manuscrits; estampes et photographie; cartes et plans; monnaies, médailles et antiques; musique. Pour chacun des départements, l'auteur a pris soin de donner les heures d'ouverture, les heures de prêt, le nombre de demandes permises, de même qu'une foule de «détails essentiels» dont l'ignorance entraîne d'innombrables délais et d'incessantes frustrations. Pour chaque salle, l'auteur a dressé la liste des usuels mis à la disposition des lecteurs, leur cote et même l'endroit où ils se trouvent. Les complexités du système de classification dans la salle des catalogues et des bibliographies sont expliquées avec minutie, une précaution que tous apprécieront, même ceux qui sont déjà rompus aux difficultés de cet exercice qui consiste à chercher la cote d'un livre ou d'une revue dans les dédales des innombrables fichiers de la salle des catalogues.

Le département des manuscrits a été traité avec un soin particulier. Le lecteur trouvera dans ce livre des indications précises, et combien précieuses, sur les divers outils mis à sa disposition pour connaître rapidement la richesse des archives de la BN. Pour chacun des fonds, pour chaque collection — il y en a plus de deux cent cinquante —, l'auteur a indiqué, chaque fois que c'était possible, les livres ou articles où ont été décrites ou analysées les séries concernées. On ne saurait trop souligner l'utilité d'une telle compilation qui permettra d'éviter des pertes de temps inutiles et coûteuses. Également précieux sont les recoupements entre les collections d'une part et les fonds classés par langue d'autre part, en particulier le fonds français et les nouvelles acquisitions françaises, le fonds latin et les nouvelles acquisitions latines.

L'ouvrage est complété par une liste d'adresses utiles: autres dépôts d'archives, bibliothèques, musées, universités, centres de recherche, de même que par un index et un plan de la BN.

En bref, il s'agit là d'un volume fort utile que les chercheurs de toutes nationalités accueilleront avec gratitude, un volume dont on ne peut que souhaiter la traduction en anglais et en français. Ce n'est pas une mince ironie que les Archives françaises — Paravicini a déjà publié un ouvrage semblable pour les Ar-