

should be complimented for preserving these stories and presenting them for the enjoyment of the men of the Fishermen's Reserve, their families and friends, and those who like seafaring yarns.

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Researcher's Guide to British Columbia: Nineteenth Century Directories, A Bibliography & Index, edited by John S. Lutz, compiled by George Young. Victoria: Public History Group, University of Victoria, 1988.

The editors of *Researcher's Guide to British Columbia* open the introduction with a quote from Charles Lamb, who in 1833 said directories were in the "catalogue of books which are no books," (p. 1) and thus were impossible to read. Initially I empathized; of the 162 pages in this "directory to directories" (p. 2) only 27 are text. The index consumes the rest. Yet this guide is not only a useful research tool but also an interesting book.

The *Researcher's Guide* is the first publication of the University of Victoria's Public History Group. The guide's purpose is to make more accessible nineteenth-century directories — those lists of "residents, their occupations and addresses, and classified lists of businesses, trades and professions. . . ." (p. 1) In the introductory first part, Lutz and Young argue that directories "are one of the richest and most accessible sources of historical information and yet one of the least used" (p. 1).

As "the handbooks of merchant capital" (p. 3), the directories had as their main purpose the making of money for their publishers (from sales, rentals and advertising). Yet a directory also served as a "valuable advertising medium" (p. 4) for a community. The publisher of Victoria's first directory in 1860 concluded that the appearance of his work was a mark of Victoria's "sufficient importance" (p. 4). For historians, directories help reveal "changing market structures and commercial connections" (p. 3). For example, the *Guide's* editors note that "five of the first of the first six directories listed" (p. 3) were printed in San Francisco, and most of the advertising in them was American. While the correct number seems to be four (p. 17), the point is that directories reflected British Columbia's initial trade ties with California. A Canadian national directory did not list B.C. until the 1890s. The editors conclude that for the early years of British Columbia, directories "provide the best available indices of economic growth and diversification up to the Canada Census of 1881" (p. 9).

As for the reliability of directories, they accept the conventional wisdom that those "continuously published by larger companies tend to be the

most reliable" (p. 6). Working primarily from American and British examples, the editors warn that directories often have a variety of class, racial, and gender biases. Like any source, they should be used with others, such as manuscript census, tax assessments, and voters' lists.

The second part of the *Researcher's Guide* is a chronological bibliography of directories published between 1860 and 1900. The termination date seems particularly artificial since the subject matter is business. A date more aligned to the business cycle, say 1912 or 1915, would have been more appropriate. The introduction claims that readers will find "over 140 directories" (p. 2). In reality, only 75 are named because three of the listings are serial directories published over many years. In length they range from eight pages (*Cubery's visitor's guide to Victoria*, 1875) to 2,800 pages (*Dominion of Canada business directory*, 1890-91). As well as the publisher and date, each citation notes the editor, number of pages and, most important, location for the directory. Only about twenty institutions across North America hold the relevant directories. Fortunately, however, most are available in British Columbia in the original, film or fiche.

The principal weakness of the bibliography is the lack of annotations for the entries. While the editors have included the full subtitles of the directories, they are only marginally helpful. For example, *The British Columbia directory* of 1883 describes itself as "containing a large amount of statistical and descriptive information respecting the Pacific province of the Dominion of Canada" (p. 20). The editors would have been wiser to provide a shortened title for each directory and a brief, critical description of its contents. A great deal of work went into this book, and the omission of informative annotations stands out prominently.

The bulk of the guide, over 140 pages, is a subject and place index for the directories. For larger centres such as Vancouver, the index offers a variety of subject categories including banks in 1889 and trade unions in 1896. For smaller communities, the main categories are "occupations," "credit ratings," and the ubiquitous "general." Most of the subjects and places are cross-indexed, which makes searching more convenient.

The *Researcher's Guide to British Columbia* contains much practical information about finding and using directories. At the same time, it offers a thoughtful analysis about their historical function and their strength and weaknesses as sources. Even for those who do not intend to use directories in their work, this guide is worth reading.