Canadian Reference and Information Books For Children

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The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hillside's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in his heaven--
All's right with the world!

-- Robert Browning, song from "Pippa Passes"

Telling lies to the young is wrong.
Proving to them that lies are true is wrong.
Telling them that God's in his heaven is wrong.
The young know what you mean. . . .
--Yevgeny Yevtushenko, from "Lies"

The opposing sentiments embodied in these two quotations echo the bewilderment of adults who are in a position to influence children's reading habits. Faced with an overwhelming amount of information, much of it emanating from the mass media, the questions of "what?" "when?" and "how much?" for children loom large indeed in the minds of thoughtful parents, teachers, and librarians. In recent years television, in particular, has brought home the complex problems of the modern world, with unprecedented forcefulness, to large numbers of people. It has held open the doors to individual human potential and to that of society with high quality educational programming. It has also provided all too frequent opportunities for mindless indulgence in escapist entertainment. We are told that television stimulates a demand for books, whose part in the information explosion should not also be underestimated. Fewer subjects than ever before remain untouched in book form. Even the simplest and most basic of human activities, where common sense was previously thought to provide all the necessary information, have their detailed explications: books telling us how to enjoy sex, to keep fit, to eat "right", to make friends, and quite recently, how to talk to children. Our government has even produced a pamphlet for adults on how to organize children's play! But no matter what explanations are given of the effects on people of television, the mass media, and the information explosion, it is generally agreed there is a greater need than ever before to help children develop a critical faculty, so that they can cope effectively with the daily deluge.

There are two schools of thought on how this can best be achieved. Some feel that the child needs protection from the cruel realities of the world, at least until he has reached the intellectual maturity of adolescence. According to this view information should be channelled into carefully planned sequences, and the school, an institution designed for this purpose, should be strengthened to do more efficiently and effectively what it has been doing in the past. On the other hand, maintaining that it is adults who need protection, not children, others advocate that we should let children virtually fend for themselves from the outset. The abolition of schools is frequently suggested, or at least their liberation from the constraints of the past. According to this view it is highly desirable that information should be freely available to all children. Each will assimilate what he needs in his own way. The situation has here been over-simplified of course. The truth of the matter, as in most arguments where extreme views are to be found, lies somewhere in the middle. A little reflection might tell us that the current debate is only the latest refinement of the "individual versus society" theme that has been a central issue in educational theorizing since Plato. There is a temptation to offer a tired "plus ça change...," and leave it there.

But in reality a reasonable middle-of-the-road approach has rarely been tried with conviction. It is being advocated here. Put simply, it is based on the following assumptions relating to the needs of children: first, children both need and want the informed guidance of adults; second, in order to be "informed" (in the sense used here), adults must know where to find reliable information and how to evaluate it critically; and third, the informed adult knows, through intuition and experience, the times when the child should be allowed to take the initiative. This article will be concerned mainly with the second of these assumptions and will address itself to the questions of what is available to satisfy the informational needs of Canadian children and just how good these books are.

Before proceeding further I should point out some of the limitations of this survey. It is confined to books, which of course are only one kind of informational source, albeit a still important one. Non-print sources are not discussed, nor are magazines and other "book-like" materials, such as the excellent portfolios of primary historical source material facsimiles in the *Canadian Jackdaws* (Clarke, Irwin) and *Dateline* (McGraw-Hill Ryerson) series. Texts and other books commissioned for classroom use are also excluded. It should be pointed out, however, that it is now becoming more difficult to make the distinction in some cases. Some series, like the Ginn and Holt "sample studies" in Canadian geography, the Holt *Examining Your Environment*, and the McGraw-Hill Ryerson *Studying Our Surroundings* are attractive enough to encourage their being read for pleasure. But the emphasis is firmly on trade books, the kind a child would normally be expected to read spontaneously for enjoyment. As for "Canadian," it here does not assume quite the importance it does for creative writing, although it certainly is not out of place to pay some attention to "Canadianness", considering the present general interest in Canadian studies. In informational writing the focus of our attention shifts from the national affiliation of the author to the validity of what he has written. It *does*

matter that Roderick Haig-Brown is a Canadian when he writes imaginatively on a Canadian theme, but not quite so much that Charles P. May is only a visitor, when he provides information about Canadian animals. For what each has to tell us can readily be verified, Nevertheless "Canadian" has been taken to refer to those books written by Canadians or authors long resident in Canada. Occasionally "outsiders" have been included for comparative purposes, or, as in May's case, where books have been conceived and originally published in Canada. As for what is meant by "reference" and "informational", a reference book is simply any book designed to answer specific enquiries, and an informational book is simply one where, more than anything else, it is clearly the author's intention to provide factual material on a particular subject. Sometimes a clear distinction is difficult to preserve. For example, the major part of *Sally Go Round the Sun* is a highly imaginative illustrated collection of children's songs that is thoroughly original in concept. But the introduction, and appended notes, sources, and references constitute an important body of information on Canadian children, and will remain indispensable until the appearance of a scholarly work, like Iona and Peter Opie's study of British children, *The Lore and Language of School Children.*

In judging informational books, several points must be remembered. I should strongly emphasize that standards must be no less rigorous for children's books than for adult books. The difference is in kind rather than degree. In creative writing, the question of "truth" is subjective and seemingly forever elusive, although some consensus may be achieved through the careful application of aesthetic principles and intuitive judgment. The "truth" or validity of information, on the other hand, may be assessed by asking two basic questions: first, to what extent is the information internally consistent, and second, to what extent does the information accord with established scientific or empirically verifiable fact? For example, we should suspect any book in which there are conflicting pieces of information. Some, such as population figures and other statistics, are relatively easy to check, whereas others, such as confused value judgments, require greater skill in that they are often more implied than openly declared. Then, too, if a book tells us that the world is flat we naturally suspect its authority (unless, of course, we are members of the Flat Earth Society). We know from outside evidence that the statement is patently false. The trouble is that validation is not always quite so simple, as for example with books propounding new theories. But if the theories are presented as *theories* rather than as objective fact, the author is being quite reasonable. (Popular books like the "Gods" books of Erich Von Daniken fall apart under such analysis.) There is an almost endless number of smaller questions that may be asked, relating to accuracy and authenticity (what are the author's credentials? are the facts up to date? does it include anthropomorphism or offer teleological explanations?), and to content (are facts and principles interrelated? are the social implications of scientific developments discussed, in science books?). Obviously organization and physical format play a part, too. Moreover, probably just as crucial as our two basic questions, there is the author's style, which is the downfall of many an otherwise acceptable book. Facts presented in contrived story form or, at the other extreme, paraded pedantically, are just as unacceptable to children as they are to adults.

Like all good writing, informational books for children, should involve the child, pique his curiosity, and create in him the desire to explore the topic further.

A brief look at one or two examples will be helpful. Like her other books, Lyn Harrington's *Australia and New Zealand, Pacific Community* is written in a lively and appealing style. But the book is rendered unacceptable by its large number of factual and typographical errors, strong pro-American bias, and stilted (as well as incorrect) use of the Australian idiom. It conveys misconceptions of Australia similar to those Canadians rightly abhor in books about Canada written by visitors. Like S. J. Totton, in the British book *The Story of Canada* (Benn, 1960), describing football as a sub-species of rugby, Mrs. Harrington shows equal confusion about Australian Rules football by including a photograph which is actually of a rugby game. On the other hand, the "content" of Robert MacDonald's *Canada; Years & Years Ago* seems unimpeachable, since it is supported by the authority of two Canadian scholars, a geologist and an archaeologist. The book's deficiencies are not in authority but in style and organization. Its format is particularly attractive; it is well designed and produced, possessing a spacious text, numerous colour illustrations, and an attractive, eye-catching dust jacket. But the effusive, grandiloquent, and at times ungrammatical language of much of the text, especially the early pages, is totally inappropriate in a book purporting to be informational. Even as a picture book it has many deficiencies. Some of the illustrations, containing minuscule or illegible printing, are too small to be of any reference value. Its general reference aids are inadequate. Bibliographic citation is sloppy, with references given in non-conventional form. There is no index. Both these books, which seem just right for young people at first glance, cannot be recommended on closer inspection. It would be better to choose an Australian book like Colin Simpson's *The New Australia*, and David Baird's *Our Earth in Continuous Change*.

All books discussed are recent publications. Only books issued between 1960 and mid-1974 have been considered in the interests of the up-to-dateness so important in this area. The reader should therefore not expect to find discussions of pioneers in this genre, like Mary Graham Bonner, whose work certainly had a place in earlier times, but not today.

As a group the books confirm the parlous state of children's book publishing in Canada. Although it is evident that many of the books are published in Canada, they are insignificant in the context of the competition from British and American houses. One British publisher, Macdonald Educational, has more information books in its current (Spring/Summer 1974) list than the total number ever produced by all Canadian publishers. For example, one Macdonald series for five-to-seven-year olds, *Starters*, has seventy titles, each on a single topic: The Moon, Eggs, Balloons, Hair, Dirt, Beetles, and so on; another the *Junior Reference Library* for older children, has an equal number, some on the same topics as *Starters* titles, others different.

This profusion from overseas only serves to underline the appallingly few Canadian titles designed for younger children. By far the largest number of our books are for the older age groups. The gaps in coverage are many. We have good dictionaries but no junior

encyclopedia. There is fair coverage of Canada in a very general sort of way and, best of all, several good books on natural history topics. On one topic, hockey, we probably have more Canadian titles than we need. Additional books are needed on specific aspects of Canadian life. There is nothing for children on religions in Canada or on cultural institutions like the National Film Board, the National Youth Orchestra, and Stratford. There are few biographies beyond those of sporting figures. Other than the policeman, nothing recent for children has been written about occupations. There is no Canadian Sasek who has written for Canadian children about their major cities. Books in these and other areas are badly needed.

Finally, a word about the arrangement of this article. Reference books are discussed first since they are traditionally the basic sources of information. The groupings, though chosen with little regard to any definitive classification, are deliberate nevertheless. The first books deal with topics largely of concern to the individual--hobbies, leisure activity, cultural development--and progress to more "other-directed" concerns: from the appreciation and understanding of nature to the complexities of society. This does nothing more than accord with that gradual growth that occurs in all of us from the egocentricity of the early child to full awareness of mature adulthood.

DICTIONARIES, ENCYCLOPEDIAS, AND READY-REFERENCE BOOKS

Although scholars had recognized the distinctiveness of Canadian English, it has only been in the last fifteen years that Canadians have had access to dictionaries which reflect these variations. Among the earliest to appear were two specifically designed for children: the first two volumes in the Gage *Dictionary of Canadian English* series. Based on the highly regarded Thorndike-Barnhart dictionaries, *The Beginning Dictionary* and *The Intermediate Dictionary* both build on a knowledge of children's needs and the ways in which they are known to learn. Because of the lack of uniformity in the habits of Canadian speech and writing, alternative pronunciations and spellings are liberally included, as are many Canadian words and meanings hitherto unavailable in dictionaries which were founded on American or British usage. *The Beginning Dictionary's* approximately 24,000 entries reflect the vocabulary in books likely to be met by grade four and five school children. Each includes a simple phonetic pronunciation, clear and concise definitions, and examples of usage in context. An excellent step-by-step introduction to using the dictionary is also provided. Intended for older children, *The Intermediate Dictionary* has over 64,000 entries, and by the addition of such features as the indication of the part of speech for all meanings of single and hyphenated words provides a bridge to the more complex conventions of adult dictionaries. For the older child who reads well and is likely to meet words not found in *The Intermediate Dictionary*, there is *The Senior Dictionary*, known in its new (1973) edition as *The Gage Canadian Dictionary*. Utilizing the pleasing type faces and spacious layout of *The Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles* (Toronto: Gage, 1967), and including many entries based on material collected for that work, *The*

Gage Canadian Dictionary has the advantages of up-to-dateness. The picture under "airplane", for example, is of a modern jet, whereas in the other two dictionaries a propeller-driven model of yesteryear is included. It is also more comprehensive: "airplane" and "aeroplane" are distinguished, and the distinctive pronunciation of "airplane" by many Canadians is pointed out, whereas the other two dictionaries treat these words synonymously. Older children requiring guidance in correct usage will find *The Intermediate Dictionary* helpful, *The Gage Canadian Dictionary* even more so. For example, both include "alright" as the informal equivalent of "all right". The former admonishes tersely: "The spelling *alright* is not generally acceptable." The latter is more informative: "The spelling *alright* is not used in formal or in most informal writing. Occasionally it is found in advertising and in comic strips, but it is not as yet generally acceptable." Although the first two volumes could profit from changes similar to these embodied in *The Gage Canadian Dictionary* they are nevertheless superior, even in their present format, to other dictionaries widely used by Canadian children, such as the series of Winston dictionaries (Toronto: Holt, 1965-9).

Experienced writers are well aware of the help that a good thesaurus can give in the search for that difficult *mot juste*. To nurture an awareness of linguistic subtleties in young children, Gage has also produced a colourful picture book, *Words to Use; a Primary Thesaurus*. Here we see a fine collection of words, arranged conceptually under six broad headings: 1. The World We Live In, 2. Living Things, 3. Being Alive, 4. How We View the World, 5. Living Together and 6. Words for Sentence Building. Quite rightly there is a preponderance of concrete terms, but abstractions are also to be found. Within the outline of a policeman's cap with POLICE in large type, we have sub-groups: RCMP, Mounted Police, Beat, Patrol, Cruiser, etc., on one side, and Cell, Prison, Jail, Bail, etc., on the other. After looking up "romantic" in the index, the child will find it nestling among "words used to describe stories": Fanciful, Legendary, Make-Believe, Spooky, etc. The author, Patrick Drysdale, also worked as a member of the team which produced *The Beginning Dictionary*. With these two books Canadian children have the basic tools to help them speak and write more precisely and acquire an elementary understanding of the complexities of language.

If Canadian children have been well served with language dictionaries, they have been somewhat less so with two other basic reference sources, the encyclopedia and atlas. There is no Canadian children's encyclopedia and no Canadian children's atlas (except school adaptations of foreign atlases with inserts of Canadian maps). Young Canadians have to be content with the numerous British and American juvenile encyclopedias and atlases, which are less than adequate, from a Canadian viewpoint, in their treatment of Canadian topics or the mapping of Canadian territory. There are, of course, *Encyclopedia Canadiana* and the atlases published primarily for adult use. There is a need in the younger child for a comprehensive guide to knowledge, for browsing, in the Arthur Mee tradition, or for fact-finding, like *Black's Children's Encyclopedia* (3rd ed., London: Black, 1971, 2 vols.). There is also a need for maps of large Canadian cities in the spirit of L. G. Bullock's *Children's Map of London* (Bartholomew) with its decorations

of nursery rhymes, poems, and coats of arms.

There are a few general reference sources that children will find useful for quick reference. While the *Canada Year Book*, issued by the Canadian Government, is an indispensable summary of just about everything in Canadian life susceptible of measurement, it is too complex for younger children. For this age group the more colourful and readable *Canada....; the Annual Handbook of Present Conditions and Recent Progress* is particularly useful. Topics of current interest--such as housing, mass media, bilingualism, and many others--are covered. An enlarged version, *Canada One Hundred, 1867-1967*, replaced the official *Handbook* to commemorate the Canadian Centennial, and still remains as one of the most attractive sources of factual information in historical perspective.

As part of their general underestimation of the capabilities of children, adults (particularly many teachers and librarians) forget that by taking one very simple step--placing in the hands of children themselves lists of recommended books--they can make accessible a wealth of information which to children usually remains a mystery. That this practice has not generally met with approval, if it has been considered at all, is due to several possible factors: perhaps because a possessive feeling towards these lists is part of a librarian's professional mystique, perhaps because traditionally children's reading is largely the prerogative of adults, perhaps because of a genuine concern that the child may be hopelessly confused. Experience has shown, however, that if given the opportunity, children are capable of directing much of their own reading. The fact that there are so few Canadian reference sources to help children explore topical interests seems to make this concession all the more desirable, especially since good lists are available. For over forty years the various editions of the Toronto Public Library's *Books for Boys and Girls* have provided outstanding guidance to the best in British, American, and Canadian literature for children. Two thousand titles are included in the latest edition. With a supplement that includes films, coverage has so far been extended to 1968. Two limitations should be noted, but are certainly not to be quibbled with: Canadian books are included only if they measure up to the high standards set for inclusion, and informational books are listed only if considered to be of enduring quality. But, of course, *Books for Boys and Girls* is included here because it is *itself* an informational book. If Canadian content is the uppermost consideration, Kay Snow and Philomena Hauck's *Canadian Materials for Schools*, The Alberta Teachers' Association's *Canadian Books for Schools,* and the Canadian School Library Association's *Canadian Materials*, should be considered. Aiming at comprehensive coverage of the total suitable publication output in all media, for 1971 and 1972 so far, *Canadian Materials* is geared to school studies at all levels, but a quick perusal confirms the dearth of books for the younger ages. Finally, mention should be made of a Canadian paperback guide to library research of use to older children, *The Canadian Student's Guide to Research* by Samuel Campbell and Nora Lupton.

THE ARTS, SPORTS, RECREATION

There appear to be only three books relating to the arts in Canada--two on ballet, one on theatre--which would have appeal to children. Both ballet titles deal with the National Ballet of Canada. Peter and Gloria Varley have collaborated to produce an outstanding record, in photograph and word, of Canada's innovative approach to the teaching of the dance, *To be a Dancer; Canada's National Ballet School.*

Complementing Peter Varley's exquisite black-and-white camera work is a text made up from conversations with the School's patrons, teachers, graduates and students. Their varied responses give a unique picture of the satisfactions and fun, as well as the uncompromising rigour, that are the lot of any aspiring professional dancer. And no finer tribute can be paid to the School than Erik Bruhn's delightful foreword to this beautifully produced book. Although also well produced and replete with photographs (and drawings), Herbert Whittaker's *Canada's National Ballet* is somewhat less successful, owing to a text that concentrates on peripheral matters such as finances rather than on the more central artistic concerns. But the pictures in themselves make a fine historical record of this achievement. Murray Edwards' account of early English-language theatre in eastern Canada, *A Stage in Our Past,* is strikingly original in format, with its decorative line cuts and paper (blue for text, yellow for illustrations). As a coherent history that places its subject in the overall social context of its time, it is a failure. As a book of information for older children it may have some value since odd pieces of information may be tracked down through an index but, read sequentially, it is difficult to imagine any adult, let alone child, managing to sustain his interest through these pages of lifeless, meandering prose. There are also other faults. The illustrations seem to be numbered for no apparent purpose. The fact that they are not listed at the beginning, not indexed, nor related to the text through references, further diminishes their value. In *Figleafing through History*, the relationship of changes in fashion to historical events throughout the ages is imaginatively recreated with a light, deft touch by Christine Harris and her daughter, Moira Johnston. This happy collaboration of writer and fashion illustrator has resulted in some interesting, if contentious, interpretations of history, as well as in useful information on individual items of clothing. For instance, the achievement of landing the first men on the moon is regarded as the triumph of the suit-wearing men of technology, industry, and the military, and the moon suit itself is described as symbolizing all the things the alienated young don't like about society:

> It was impersonal and physically restricting; the wearer could walk on the moon, but he could not easily have bent down to tie a child's shoelace. It manipulated him, isolated him from his fellow men, and insulated him from his environment. It gave him absolutely no scope for personal self expression. Its discreet American flag marked him as just another expensive product Made in U.S.A. And it gave him the power to mess up even more of his environment.
>
> To the young, the moon suit was function at the expense of human values.

Not surprisingly, sport has far many more titles than the arts. Most sports books are issued for a wide audience, with the juvenile market firmly in mind, for in the child's world as in the adult's one, sport has a much higher consumer value than culture, and publishers have recognized this fact as much as anybody else. In general these books are undistinguished and forgettable as pieces of writing, and quite often have the additional deficiency of poorly reproduced photographs, though these are usually the main focus of the reader's attention. My comment is made, of course, in full awareness that any disfavour the books may incur from a critic is not likely to be a deterrent to the abiding attraction sports books have for large numbers of boys. Some of the worst examples are to be found among the books about professional sporting figures. These "biographies" are often simply extensions of approaches used by the mass media, which, by emphasizing such things as inflated contract demands or commercial endorsements of shaving cream and drug store chains, project their subjects' images more as successful businessmen (or women) than as sportsmen (or women). These books do provide information. But what kind of information, one may ask? Hockey probably accounts for more of these titles than all other sports combined. Robert Jackson's "*Here Comes Bobby Orr*" (New York: Walck, 1971) offers a wealth of statistics but little insight into Orr as a person, or into the game of hockey, for that matter. Orr's own book, *Orr on Ice* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), is worse. Primarily a pictorial work, many of its numerous action photographs are irrelevant and of appalling quality. The first dozen, for example, each taking up a whole page, show Bobby Orr dressing for a game. Others, already fuzzy, are additionally distorted by amateurish attempts at retouching. Marshall and Sue Burchard have produced a more simple, straightforward, but somewhat romanticized account in *Sports Hero Bobby Orr*. That a high quality hockey book can be written is shown by Brian Conacher's *Hockey in Canada*. In addition to bringing vividly to life several Stanley Cup playoff games, Conacher has given boys a fine eritical account of the contemporary (1970) Canadian hockey scene, including some of the pitfalls of embarking on a hockey career and constructive suggestions for improvement in the National Hockey League's policies towards the training of young players. Readers wishing factual information on hockey players are better off with collected biographies such as Frank Orr's *Hockey's Greatest Stars*, Andy O'Brien's *Superstars; Hockey's Greatest Players* and Trent Frayne's *Famous Hockey Players*. For general hockey information there are two books by Brian McFarlane: *Everything You've Always Wanted to Know about Hockey* and *Hockey Annual*. Although less numerous, books of hockey instruction are generally of a much higher standard. For the very young there is *Hockey, the Right Start* by Georges Larivière and Justin Bournical, which is a valuable substitute for the inexpensive summer school tuition many parents are not able, or perhaps willing, to afford. Vancouver journalist Eric Whitehead's *Ice Hockey* is brief, and assumes no knowledge of the game whatsoever. For more detail there is Tom Watts' *How to Play Hockey*, and *Hockey*, by the Head of the University of Western Ontario's Department of Physical Education, Bill L'Heureux. Of all the books on basic techniques, John Wild's *Power Skating* most successfully combines text and photographic illustration in an excellent guide to what is probably the most important skill of all.

There is probably no one general hockey book which is completely satisfactory. Brian McFarlane's *50 Years of Hockey* contains an overwhelming amount of chronologically-arranged information, but lacks an index. Frank Orr's *The Story of Hockey* is marred by pedestrian writing, but at least has younger readers in mind, unlike Henry Roxborough's generally superior *The Stanley Cup Story. Hockey! the Story of the World's Fastest Sport* by Richard Beddoes, Stan Fischler, and Ira Gitler is difficult to recommend as a source of objective information because of its anecdotal format and effusive style.

Nothing can demonstrate more clearly that professional hockey is the dominating sport in the eyes of the young than does the contrasting paucity of children's books on other sports. Even football has barely a handful--a couple of histories and no up-to-date instructional guide. There is Eddie MacCabe's *Profile of a Pro: the Russ Jackson Story* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), which looks just the thing for boys but turns out to be merely another endorsement of the financial rewards and status value of sporting success.

It is disappointing to note that other sports of interest to many young Canadians, such as skiing, athletics, and gymnastics, lose out in the face of the big, commercialized spectator sports, as do the more distinctively Canadian curling and lacrosse. This last-mentioned sport, once Canada's most popular and now enjoying a resurgence of interest has until recently inspired only two Canadian books--published in 1869 and 1873! After one hundred years another has at last appeared, James Hinkson's *Box Lacrosse: the Fastest Game on Two Feet.*

Aquatic recreations such as sailing, boating, and fishing are popular among large numbers of Canadians. Unfortunately frequent drowning tragedies occur. Since it has been estimated that over half the Canadian population cannot swim, a book of instruction for children is especially welcome. Harry McPhee states that *Learning to Swim* is "primarily for parents who wish to teach their pre-school children to swim, [and] the instruction is such that anyone, regardless of age, who wishes to learn to swim will find a wealth of information meeting the need for easily understood directions." He admirably succeeds in his purpose. Young children themselves can gain much of value from the pictures, and when they are older, they can follow the simple text.

Until an adult market became evident, there was little available for the child about his bicycle. Now he has access to a profusely illustrated paperback dealing with every aspect of bicycle maintenance and repair, which also gives consumer advice on purchasing, safety hints, and suggested cycle tours, including those over little travelled paths. *The Canadian Bicycle Book* is to be preferred to the less attractive *Boy's Book of Biking* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole, 1968), one of *The World of Boyhood Library* series by the Canadian, Allan A. MacFarlan. Unhappily MacFarlan makes the mistake of giving the child too much information, more than he could conceivably ever need, and his stress on the virtues of physical fitness, tests of skill, and cycling contests with an almost missionary zeal, revives the "muscular Christianity" style of writing characteristic of many boys' books of the nineteenth century.

MacFarlane has also written numerous books about other recreational activities for children and young people: camping, hiking, knotcraft, "outdoor discover," and "rainy-day doings." By and large they suffer failings similar to those in the author's book on biking. Useful information--and there is a great deal--is difficult to elicit from the plethora of inconsequential triviality. In *The Boy's Book of Backyard Camping*, for example, a simple, enjoyable play activity, seemingly requiring a minimum of fuss, is explicated to the last detail: there are lengthy discussions of tents, equipment, firebuilding, cookery, knotcraft, first aid--even sanitation and direction-finding. Moreover, the writing is prolix and the tone somewhat condescending, with doses of cautionary advice liberally administered. The physical format is equally pedestrian. Though not much better to hold and look at, Kerry Wood's *A Time for Fun; A Guide to Hobbies and Handicrafts* is much more interesting, with a personal touch that is distinctively Canadian. Here a young person may learn such things as how to make an inexpensive tumbling machine to polish stones, how to carve juniper branches, and the many things that can be done with driftwood. In the chapter on outdoor cookery, a recipe is given for a delicious "hunter's stew" of rabbit, porcupine, squirrel and other succulent raw materials! Finally, a recreational activity book for younger children is Judy Owens' exuberant picture book, *Hallowe'en Fun*, which offers a small number of simple, practical ideas for that once-a-year party.

Professor Chapman is on the faculty of the School of Librarianship at the University of British Columbia. *Part II of his article will appear in the next issue of* Canadian Children's Literature, *and will cover such categories of information books as "Personal Development" [Health, Growing Up, Sex Education, Careers], "General Science and Natural History," and "The World, Canada, Contemporary Society--and the Future."*