

H-Net Reviews

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Jose C. Curto, Raymond R. Gervais. *Bibliography of Canadian Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations on Africa, 1905-1993/ Bibliographie des Memoires de Maitrise et Theses de Doctorat Canadiens sur L'Afrique 1905-1993*. Montreal: Canadian Association of African Studies, 1994. ii + 311 pp. CDN \$18.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-920184-14-1.

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A Database for the Study of African Studies

A bibliography of theses and dissertations is useful on several levels. Of prime importance is its value as an indication of research already done on a region or topic. Graduate students preparing dissertation and thesis proposals desperately need to make their survey of the literature as complete as possible. Despite the access rendered by DAI and Canadian Dissertations, specific guides such as Curto and Gervais, when reliably comprehensive, as theirs is, make the literature search much less arduous.

When the theses and dissertations are relatively easy to access through inter-library loan or purchase, dissertation guides are also useful in research at any level. Beyond utility for further research, dissertation guides offer quantitative insight into patterns and trends in the field. Curto and Gervais use the data gathered in the course of compiling their bibliography to offer some interesting analyses of African studies in Canada.

Evaluating their bibliography first on its merits as a bibliography, it is excellent. 3112 entries have been compiled, and the introduction clearly outlines the thorough work that went into that compilation. The list is arranged alphabetically by author's name within sections for individual countries, regions and the continent as a whole. There are indices by author, granting institution, and subject. The authors do not comment on the terminology used in the subject index, but it follows a logical, common sense approach using key words in title. Broader terms seem to have been applied judiciously in addition to narrow terms for many items. A dissertation on cash cropping in Cote d'Ivoire, for instance, has subject en-

tries under both "cash crops" and "agriculture." Another work on construction of a margarine factory in Senegal has subject entries under both "margarine" and "industry." Spot samples such as these give the librarian and researcher a great deal of confidence in the work as a research tool.

A list of abbreviations for degrees clarifies what could be mysterious and confusing. For instance, whereas M.F.A. at my institution is Master of Fine Arts, in this list it stands for Master of Folklore and Arts. The citations are straightforward: author, title, degree, institution, year. It is not clear whether Ethiopian, Zairian and other names, usually entered without transposing, have actually been transposed or not. This may cause some difficulty, but the problem is so common that persons working on these areas know to try both forms of the name. Number of pages would have been a useful, additional bit of information, but this might not have been uniformly available without consulting each individual dissertation.

If these criticisms seem to be curmudgeonly quibbles, they are; they simply present the details that could make an excellently prepared bibliography near perfect.

Most of the Introduction (written in English and French side by side in columns) is given over to analysis of the data provided by the compilation of the bibliography. The inclusion of dissertations by Canadians at foreign institutions (a total of 61: 8 M.A. theses and 53 Doctoral dissertations) makes one question how this data was secured and whether it is complete. The data for Cana-

dian universities, however, seems exhaustive. It is a measure of the mild tension between residents on either side of the world's longest unguarded border that the authors alluded to some degree of purposeful misrepresentation of Canadian African studies scholarship in earlier bibliographies of dissertations (Sims and Kagan's *American and Canadian Doctoral Dissertations on Africa, 1886-1974**, and Lauer, Larkin and Kagan's *American and Canadian Doctoral Dissertations on Africa, 1974-1987**, both published by ASA) and that this review bridled somewhat at the implication. No matter—the analysis is fascinating. The tables illustrate the number of theses and dissertations done by year, by institution, by region or country, by discipline. Other tables show CIDA funded African students annually by country of origin and by gender.

Curto and Gervais use these figures to chart the history and growth of African studies in Canada. Throughout the period, master's theses far outnumbered PhD dissertations. This is attributed to the lack of major African studies centers in Canada, with numerous Africanist faculty, adequate Africana library holdings and sufficient research funding. Interest in and spending on the study of Africa grew in the 1960s and 1970, with the Canadian Association of African Studies taking a leadership role in guiding that growth. Funding dropped in the 1980s and

1990s following the country's overall economic situation.

Nearly two-thirds of all theses and dissertations were done at eight institutions: McGill University, Université de Laval, Université de Montréal, University of Toronto, Carleton University, Dalhousie University, University of Alberta, Queens University and University of British Columbia. The comparison between U.S. and Canadian production in terms of geographic area and discipline is interesting. There is some overlap, but Canada produces significantly more work on Francophone Africa. Most theses and dissertations from each country cluster into five disciplines, but the clusters are differently configured. Political science tops the Canadian list; education the U.S. list.

Curto and Gervais touch on some interpretations of this data in terms of gender, financial support and other factors in the decision of students to undertake the study of Africa. They suggest that a longitudinal study following academic careers and publishing output would yield an interesting and more definitive picture of African studies as a field of study.

The book is highly recommended for all libraries supporting African studies curricula. The price and format make it a useful purchase for individuals.

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