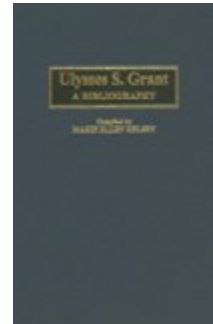


# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Marie Ellen Kelsey. *Ulysses S. Grant: A Bibliography*. Westport: Praeger, 2005. xxix + 463 pp. \$119.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-313-28176-1.

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## A Thorough but Perhaps Outdated Project

This new reference work on Ulysses S. Grant by Marie Ellen Kelsey is the latest volume in the *Bibliographies of the Presidents of the United States* series published by Praeger. Like other volumes in the series, this one includes an exhaustive list of primary and secondary sources related to Grant's personal, military, and political life. The result is 4,242 items that span 402 pages. As a tool for researchers this bibliography is indispensable. While it is impossible to confirm whether Kelsey has compiled as complete a list as possible of references up to 2005, it nevertheless offers any researcher a detailed survey of archival materials as well as secondary sources that cover a broad spectrum of subjects. Kelsey provides a short overview of Grant's life as well as a time-line for easy reference. The majority of chapters are organized chronologically, beginning with Grant's early military career and extending through the Civil War, his two terms as president, and his post-presidential years. These chapters are flanked on both sides by sections covering manuscript and other primary sources as well as biographies, historiographical materials, iconography, and historic sites related to Grant's life.

There is very little to criticize in this volume. One marvels at the amount of time and energy it must have taken to complete such a project. The problem with such projects, however, is that they often become outdated shortly after publication. This is particularly true in the case of much-studied presidents. Over the last twenty-five years, historiography concerning Grant's life has burgeoned, beginning with the publication of William McFeely's *Grant* in 1981 and continuing through to more

recent studies by Brooks Simpson, Jean E. Smith, and Geoffrey Perret, among others.[1] A basic search of "Ulysses S. Grant" on Amazon.com yields 1,387 titles published after 2005, and this does not include sources beyond books and videos.[2] And there is little indication that interest is declining.

While Kelsey cannot be blamed for failing to include references published after 2005, in an age of collaborative websites (wikis) this kind of project is destined to become obsolete. Collaborative websites that enable a large community of users to create, edit, and search vast amounts of information have the potential to bring the benefits of a bibliographical project such as the one currently under review to a much wider audience at little or no cost. Given its price tag of \$119.00, it is impossible to imagine that Kelsey's bibliography will find a home beyond the colleges and universities that can afford to purchase such an item. In addition, wiki technology has the benefit of being searchable beyond the confines of chapter subheadings and indices and can be continually updated. More importantly, the range of sources included can be expanded well beyond published studies on Grant specifically to include various sources that reference Grant in some capacity. The possibilities are endless.

## Notes

[1]. William S. McFeely, *Grant* (New York: Norton, 1981); Brooks D. Simpson, *Ulysses S. Grant: Triumph over Adversity, 1822-1865* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000); Jean E. Smith, *Grant* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001); Geoffrey Perret, *Ulysses S. Grant, Soldier and Pres-*

*ident* (New York: Random House, 1997).

[2]. This number does not account for various reprints.

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