

H-Net Reviews

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The Proceedings of the 2000-2003 Meetings of the Southwest/Texas Popular Culture and American Culture Associations.
Leslie Fife, ed..

Reviewed by Peter C. Rollins

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Since the early 1970s, the Southwest/Texas PCA/ACA have met together in Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico. In recent years, Albuquerque has been a very attractive venue and will be so in the future according to Ken Dvorak, the convention planner (Ken.Dvorak@sjcd.edu). For the last ten years, the organization has had a web site on H-Net and has been able to announce conference information on that site with great success—not only in the United States, but around the globe. In recent years, the meeting has been enhanced by participation from the Rocky Mountain American Studies Association (contact: Amanda Cobb, University of New Mexico, at acobb@unm.edu). The papers at these meetings have real merit and some are published in scholarly journals; however, there are many quality discussions which could inspire further research which will not see print. For this reason, the meeting has produced *Proceedings* for decades beginning in 1979 and continuing in hard copy, microfilm, or CD-ROM to the present. During the early years, with the help of graduate students in the Oklahoma State University program, we produced hard-copy *Proceedings*. We deposited a copy of the ponderous collection in the Edmon Low Library of OSU and then a second copy at Cowboy Copy of Stillwater—which sent out Xerox sets to requesting libraries and individuals. For most of the early years, the Oklahoma Historical Society created a microfilm record for preservation purposes. This service was appreciated by both participants and the institutions, but had obvious drawbacks since we did not produce an index to the collection. For the last seven years or so, we have produced our *Proceedings* on CD-ROM. These collections are word-searchable and thus help scholars to pull their net through all of the papers in search of particular authors, images, and concepts. Not surprisingly,

there is a lot of overlap in the popular culture/American culture presentations and the CD-ROM format allows Adobe Acrobat to do its work in service of the intellect. The current *Proceedings* covers papers delivered from 2000 to 2003 and represents those presentations actually submitted to the editor, Dr. Leslie Fife of Oklahoma State University. There are 142 presentations in this collection and it is possible to enter a term such as “audience” and then ask the Adobe Acrobat software to seek out instances in the collection as a whole. The search can come up with some very important connections which may spark further insight by the researcher. Just as an experiment, I put in the name of “Ray Browne,” founder of the national organizations: there are 21 such references. The term “mass media” yielded 171 entries. And every discussion represents a new approach to their chosen subjects. While there is no index to the collection, there is a detailed, topical table of contents arranged in alphabetical order. For example, the first ten categories with papers are as follows:

- African-American Culture
- American Mythic Patterns
- American Studies
- Animal Rights
- Atomic Culture
- The Beats and Counterculture
- Biographies and Autobiographies
- California Culture
- Captivity Narratives
- Chicano Culture

The list marches along through motion pictures, material culture, music, icons in popular culture, and other fascinating popular culture genres. The lead consultant, Philip Heldrich (Emporia State University) describes the collection in his introduction: *The purpose of these Proceedings is to share knowledge. Some pieces take more formal approaches while others communicate in less theoretical terms. Some studies represent the genesis of an idea, while others present more finalized research. I’m proud to say that many of the pieces from previous years made*

their way into published papers, anthologies, and book-length studies. As much research grows from the kernel of an idea, these Proceedings and its wealth of knowledge should be necessary holding for academic, community college, and local libraries. (p. xviii)

Heldrich's comments point to the varying states of readiness of the papers. Some are here for discussion purposes while others are finished products; either way, for the right person, they could provide inspiration. There are some 2,550 pages of text in the body of the collection and the papers make a very large pool of information and expertise. The collection concludes with author profiles which, as someone associated with these meetings since day one, I found of great interest—giving me new insights into people whom I have known for decades. As a device for promoting community, the author profile section is interesting, indeed. For many years, Gary L. Kieffner has been our Area Chair for Motorcycle Culture and Myth; he is now joined this year by Co-Chair Suzanne Ferriss. Gary has done a wonderful job of attracting fascinating papers about this element of popular culture, including legislative battles. Gary Keifner includes a photo of himself from earlier days that will be difficult to match with the current scholar, but the

pictorial for Suzanne Buck will be an inspiration to all who admire the motorcycle as a symbol of recreation and pure fun. The photo entries put a human face on the articles—a detail of importance to all who celebrate scholarship as a human endeavor. This is a fine collection and, as one of the founders (along with Michael K. Schoenecke) of the organizations, I am delighted that the current executive committee (Philip Heldrich and Ken Dvorak) are carrying this task forward with the expert help of Leslie Fife. One of the great thrills of scholarship is the act of sharing insights with others; this CD-ROM *Proceedings* is a cornucopia of information, opinion—and sharing. This compilation is a must for all university and college libraries, and a required item for all libraries concerned about contemporary culture and the influence of popular images and genres. Certainly, the libraries of scholars represented in the collection should own it for preservation, teaching, and scholarly purposes. CD-ROM is available for purchase from: Philip Heldrich Department of English Box 4019 Emporia State University Emporia, KS 66801-5087 email: pheldrich@esumail.emporia.edu telephone: 620-341-5216

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

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