

## Book Review

*Jack McIntosh*

*Russian Publishers, Printers, Booksellers and Binders; An Annotated Bibliography of Their Labels and Marks.* Iurii Sergeevich Borodaev and Iurii Petrovich Martsevich. Edited with preface by William E. Butler. Introduction by Mikhail Hornung. Bicester: Primrose Hill Press, ©2003. Casebound, 240 pp. £45.00. Edition limited to 125 numbered copies.

This Bibliography contains 1235 annotated and thoroughly indexed entries (including even an index of collectors of publishers marks). Mostly in Russian, with introductory materials in both Russian and English, the bibliography notes literature that mentions or illustrates publisher, printer, bookseller and book-binder labels and marks, including a limited number of foreign ones. Three hundred twenty-nine labels and marks are illustrated and identified, many by the most noted graphic artists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

This fascinating fruit of many years labour on the part of octogenarian compilers Borodaev and Martsevich is without doubt a unique, even indispensable aid to the study of the affiliation and provenance of books published in Russia. However, the bibliography ignores Russian publishers operating beyond the state censorship of the Soviet period and suffers from serious shortcomings of presentation.

Although the English-language cover, title page and parallel-text English and Russian introductory materials are expressly intended to “create interest in the manual among foreign readers,” few concessions have actually been made to the non-Russian reader. Annotations are in

Russian, as are all references to Russian-language publications, even in the translated introductory sections.

The translations accompanying the introductory materials are excessively literal and verbose. At times this reviewer had to resort to the Russian text to decipher the writer’s intent.

William Butler’s editorship is evidently more honorary than real. His single-page preface notes that this bibliography “records more than 1240 entries,” whereas the actual number is 1235. He informs readers that “entries were included comprehensively through 1997, with occasional additions ... for the remaining years of the century.” In fact, the final entry is dated 1997. Had Butler actually edited the text of the bibliography, he would have noticed himself listed as “Batler, W. E.” (entry number 511)!

The index of publishers, in a single Cyrillic alphabetical sequence, is haphazard; names of non-Russian publishers appear variously and unpredictably in Roman script, translation, or transliteration. For example:

“Арлекин’ (Harlequin)”  
“Академическая книга’(‘AP’)”  
[Academic Press],  
“Academie [sic] Verlag’  
(Берлин, ГДР)”  
[Akademie Verlag],  
“Академия Наук’ (Будапешт)”  
[Akademiai Kiado (Budapest)],  
“Халпер и братья”  
[Khapper (sic) & bros.]  
[Harper, presumably].

William Morris appears in this index in two guises:

“Кельмскоотская печатня  
(‘Kelmscott Press’,  
владелец Уильям Моррис)”  
[three entries indexed], and  
“Моррис, Уильям”  
[one entry indexed].

The bibliography itself suffers from inadequate editing, most noticeable in non-Russian entries. The first item, in Polish, contains *three* typographical errors.

Perhaps it is unfair to fault this book unduly for weaknesses in its coverage of non-Russian publishers that are, after all, incidental to its main theme. A more serious shortcoming is the unacknowledged fact that coverage of even Russian-language publishers is limited by constraints affecting accessibility during the years in which the compilers did most of their work. Absent are Russian émigré publishers not subject to Soviet-era censorship. Likewise, Western studies relevant to the subject are only scantily represented.

While applauding the “gigantic, labour intensive task” accomplished by the compilers (quoting Mikhail Hornung), I am disappointed that they have been ill-served by the producers of this book.

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*Jack McIntosh is former Slavic & Science Bibliographer of the University of B.C. Library. He is currently editor of the TRANSLetter, the newsletter of the Society of Translators and Interpreters of B.C. (STIBC). His long-term project is a revised and expanded bibliography of the UBC Library’s “ever growing collection of Doukhobor-related materials.”*



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