At a time when interdisciplinary studies are gaining popularity in the university, Kerst's bibliography encourages the folklorist to search for inspiration in the diverse approaches to folklore from many disciplinary perspectives. While its domain overlaps with that of such standard sources as Georges and Stern's American and Canadian Immigrant and Ethnic Folklore: An Annotated Bibliography, this new sourcebook brings to light studies that might have remained unknown to folklorists. Ethnic Folklife Dissertations is a welcome addition to the research tools used in ethnic folklore research.


Reviewed by Robert E. Walls.

The Native American cultures of the Pacific Northwest have long proven fertile ground for folkloristic research, with such noted scholars as Franz Boas, Melville Jacobs, and Dell Hymes bringing in much of the harvest. The cultural and linguistic complexity that underlies this region, however, is often intimidating to those unfamiliar with it, should they have designs on initiating their own regional research. Ruby and Brown - an anthropologist and an historian, respectively - have prepared this guide for the general public: unfortunately, it most definitely is not a reference work which can be used effectively by interested students and scholars.

The guide's format is encyclopedic, with over 150 native groups (including confederated tribes on specific reservations) listed in alphabetical order. The actual amount of description for each
entry varies according to the amount of ethno-
graphic information available for individual
groups. Each entry includes a general ethno-
graphic introduction and sections on the group’s
geographic locations, population numbers, history
of contact with Euro-American society, tribal
governments and disputes over land claims, con-
temporary life and culture, special events,
(powwows, rodeos, canoe races, treaty celebra-
tions, etc.), and suggested readings. While
there are some cross-references for tribal
names, more could have been added and a chart
outlining tribal languages and synonymy would
have further obviated confusion. The book also
includes maps of tribal locations prior to con-
tact, reservations, Indian missions, fur and
military posts, and language families as well as
a list prepared by linguist M. Dale Kinkade on
the pronunciation of tribal names.

Ruby and Brown have furnished an introductory
overview of the complex ethnographic setting for
native cultures in the Northwest, with a partic-
ularly strong emphasis on historical relation-
ships between Indians and whites. Students just
beginning to learn about this region will find
the sections on contemporary life and special
events handy supplements to detailed but out-of-
date ethnographic treatments. The limitations of
this book, however, will quickly become apparent
to advanced students and scholars. The authors
depict the Northwest in the Euro-American sense
- Washington, Oregon, and Idaho - and ignore the
prior demarcations of the Northwest Coast,
Plateau, and Great Basin culture areas. This is
not a work to learn of the subtleties of ethno-
graphic description: there is virtually no reli-
able information on native expressive culture;
there are dangerously broad generalizations on
native religions; and various aspects of indivi-
dual cultures are isolated and sensationalized,
such as slavery, war, and infanticide.

While this reference tool will work in a
pinch for the less discriminating, others should wait for the more detailed and authoritative volumes on the Northwest Coast and the Plateau in the Smithsonian's Handbook of North American Indians series, due out in the next few years.


Reviewed by Timothy Cochrane.

Native American Renaissance is a critical appreciation and examination of modern Native American prose and poetry. Focusing primarily on the last two decades of published fiction, Lincoln traces the sudden flowering of Native American written art. And as a part of his task, he traces the dynamic adaptation and influence of oral literature on the printed text. Lincoln articulates numerous continuities between oral and written literature, for example, the seemingly pan-American belief that words embody, not merely denote meanings, objects, and the natural world.

The collection of essays focusing on select Native American authors also includes a succinct review of the history of printed Native American literature and a handy, yet sophisticated, characterization of American Indian verbal art. Lincoln's efforts to characterize oral literature (in order to follow its reemergence in creative writing) is of special interest to folklorists. He recognizes eight underlying tenets of "ancestral" verbal art: 1) the primacy of words in Indian life, 2) the presence of nature in oral literature, 3) the creative economy of verbal art, 4) the welcomeness of play in all speech realms, 5) the tendency to see "the world through symbolic detail," 6) the propensity of "songs" to invigorate other cultural phenomena,