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Review of "The American West: A Narrative Bibliography and a Study in Regionalism" by Charles Wilkinson

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The American West: A Narrative Bibliography and a Study in Regionalism. Charles Wilkinson. NiWot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1989. Photos, bibliography, and notes. xiv + 144 pages. \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0-87081-204-1).

For the younger scholar interested in the West, Professor Wilkinson's book offers a bibliographic shortcut with a carefully selected and balanced listing of nearly 500 essential entries. The author skillfully weaves annotation of some works into a smoothly flowing text; other items are simply listed in concluding paragraphs.

The book's distinctive organization selectively highlights certain characteristics of the West. The initial chapter reviews the attempts to define the West geographically. The next chapter, "Events," discusses works dealing with Western history, but focusses on key or illustrative conflicts and turning points. Chapter 3 addresses "Peoples," which may be influential individuals, subcultures, occupations, or institutions (e.g., Weyerhaeuser Company). A review of works on natural history and resources makes up the next chapter rather inappropriately termed "Terrain." The last substantial chapter lists works under the subject of "Ideas," that is, basically philosophy behind policy. A bibliography of 54 pages, each entry referenced to page(s) of occurrence in narrative, concludes the book.

A bibliography covering one-half of the United States and about 200 years of accounts and interpretations faces the inevitable question, "Why didn't the author include . . . ?" Wilkinson makes no pretense concerning the coverage. In the preface he states the selection criteria: general availability and personal familiarity. The reader, therefore, should not expect an all-inclusive bibliography. Almost all the choices are books, although a few articles crop up in the bibliography. Considering the multitude of pertinent articles in the literature, the smattering of articles could best be omitted.

The overriding theme, returning in chapter after chapter, even in "Terrain," is the question of public policy and the West. In the policy questions, conservation of natural resources becomes a central subject and dominates the bibliographic selections. Equity, values, rights, and economy in resource decisions, long a focus of Wilkinson's research, expectably receive full exposure. The section on subcultures, under "Peoples," is especially good in this regard.

I highly recommend this beautifully edited, no frills book. One may argue with coverage or opinions expressed, but on balance, one would be hard pressed to find a better selection of 500 highly readable works on the West. The book will constitute a fine, inexpensive starting point for any seminar that deals with Western policy. Kenneth A. Erickson, *Department of Geography, University of Colorado*.