

Review of 'Repertoire International des Medievistes / International Directory of Medievalists'

Article

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Répertoire International des Médiévistes / International Directory of Medievalists

(Published under the auspices of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes) by K.G. Saur. Sixth edition, 2 vols., Munich, Paris and New York, 1987, x + 1259, with index. £95.

Although containing fewer biographical entries than the fifth edition of 1979, the new issue of this valuable International Directory of Medievalists is the bulkiest to date, published in part to mark the 50th anniversary of its co-ordinators, the Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes. With 4,927 entries drawn from over 40 countries, it includes a wide spectrum of medievalists of all disciplines, whether active within or outside the sector of higher education. In this new edition, the scope is widened to embrace those working on the Late Antique and early Renaissance periods. Each entry provides biographical and locational details, together with a summary of the main fields of study and a selective bibliography of recently published works. For the first time too, the Directory is given a subject index in which researchers have been allocated to one or more of 37 headings, which include *archéologie*, *généalogie*, *histoire militaire*, and *histoire des idées et des mentalités*.

The publishers have attempted to produce a work which is of value as both directory and bibliography. It is undoubtedly a boon to conference organisers and bears constant witness to the wealth of research and publication in all areas of medieval studies. The vitality of the subject can be in no doubt from the evidence of the projects listed as *en préparation*.

Any attempt at comprehensiveness, however, is bound to be fraught with difficulties. Indeed as the editors remark, the lengthy hiatus between the appearance of the fifth edition in 1979 and the sixth in 1987 reveals the increasing problems experienced in preparing this kind of biographical listing for publication. In no way can it be assumed that all medievalists are included. Less than half of the 10,000 questionnaires were returned and there are several significant omissions, most notably in the ranks of literary

specialists. The vast scale of the undertaking, in standardizing and editing the entries let alone in printing them, inevitably means that the work is out of date as soon as it appears, if not long before. In effect, it records activities carried out in the period from 1974 to 1980, so that any serious researcher would have to supplement its entries by consulting the International Medieval Bibliography which provides a far more comprehensive and up-to-date guide to published works. This said, the Directory is a fascinating and informative guide, and may be no less so to the historian of the future who chooses to delve into the life and mind of the late twentieth-century medievalist!

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