FINAL REPORT TO
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN RESEARCH

TITLE: The American Bibliography of Slavic and East European Studies (ABSEES)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The American Bibliography of Slavic and East European Studies (ABSEES) is an annual reference work which provides a comprehensive listing of North American publications in the field of Soviet and East European studies. Published since 1956, the Bibliography covers all academic disciplines and includes information on books, articles, dissertations, and reviews appearing within the calendar year. The series is widely consulted by researchers in the Soviet/East European field, and is found in most major libraries.

In 1973, as a service to researchers nationwide, the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies accepted responsibility for publication and distribution of the volumes, and the Library of Congress took over the work of compiling the list of annual entries for the Bibliography. The Association also agreed to extend certain financial support to the Library in this joint endeavor.

Each annual volume of the Bibliography offers approximately 5,000 or more references. Entries are classified by geographic area and by subject matter. The eighteen subject classifications cover all fields of study including such major areas as economics, history, international relations, literature, and military affairs.

ABSEES is a unique source of information on current North American research and publication on the USSR and Eastern Europe. It provides a broad, highly convenient set of references not available through any combination of abstracts, indexes, or other bibliographies, and it reveals trends in research on the area over time.

For the past two years, the NCSEER contract with the AAASS has made it possible to continue compilation of the Bibliography at the Library of Congress by providing support for a full-time editor and a part-time graduate student intern. During this two-year period the Library staff and the AAASS produced and published the 1986 and 1987 volumes of ABSEES, and began compilation of the 1988 volume.

Continued innovations in compilation and automated procedures have streamlined all aspects of the project and allowed the staff to maintain the Bibliography's quality while improving its appearance and accelerating its production.
I. ABSEES

A. HISTORY

The American Bibliography of Slavic and East European Studies is an annual reference work which provides a comprehensive listing of North American publications in the field of Soviet and East European studies. The Bibliography has appeared since 1956. It covers all academic disciplines and includes information on books, articles, and reviews published within the calendar year. The series is widely consulted by researchers in the Soviet/East European field, and is found in most major libraries.

Initially, ABSEES was compiled and published at different universities under the editorship of faculty members. The need for sustained professional staffing, however, led to a new arrangement. In 1973, as a service to researchers nationwide, the Library of Congress took over the work of compiling the list of annual entries for the Bibliography, and the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies accepted responsibility for publication and distribution of the volumes. The Association also agreed to extend certain financial support to the Library in this joint endeavor.

From 1980 through September 1985 ABSEES was supported in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). When that support was no longer available, the AAASS sought assistance from the National Council for Soviet and East European Research (NCSEER). Thanks to a contract awarded by the Council it became possible to continue publication of the Bibliography without interruption. This report covers the contract period 1 October 1987 - 30 September 1989.

B. SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE

Since its inception, ABSEES has been an invaluable tool for researchers in the field of Soviet and East European studies. Each volume lists an average of over 5,000 items--books, portions of books, book reviews, journal and review articles, dissertations--published in the US and Canada in the arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences. A separate section is devoted to reviews of books.

In addition to providing references to materials for academic and government analysts, researchers, and policy-makers, the Bibliography serves teachers and students (from secondary school through postgraduate work), and members of the general public. Not only does it facilitate work in Soviet and East European studies, but it promotes better public understanding of the area. Each volume of ABSEES presents North American writing on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe published in the volume year.

With the help of financial support from NCSEER, ABSEES has developed in the last two years from a manually-compiled bibliography to one
produced with the assistance of a computer. Eventually ABSEES may be made available to users in the form of floppy disks or magnetic tapes.

II. OVERVIEW (1 October 1987-30 September 1989)

A. MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS:

1. A new editor was hired, and she began work on January 4, 1988.

2. A typesetter was located who specializes in producing camera-ready copy from the software (TeX) currently used to produce the Bibliography. Production procedures were made more efficient, and the appearance of the Bibliography was improved. Camera-ready copy for the 1987 volume of the Bibliography was prepared by the typesetter, enabling the staff to devote more time to editing and other tasks.

3. A new version of the database in use was installed and tested by the staff. Reflex 2.0 will allow the staff to perform all compiling and production procedures on its own equipment.

B. MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS:

1. The new editor and bibliographic assistant (the latter hired in June 1987) improved procedures, established more comprehensive guidelines, and refined all aspects of the automated system.

2. The 1986 volume was compiled. The staff assembled, merged, and sorted all materials using the new automated system and produced the camera-ready copy with the assistance of the Library's automation liaison. The manuscript was printed and distributed.

3. The 1987 volume was compiled. The staff assembled, merged, and sorted materials. The professional typesetter produced the camera-ready copy. The manuscript was printed and distributed.

4. Approximately half of the 1988 volume has been compiled and entered on computer disk. A file has been started for the 1989 volume.

5. In order to solve project difficulties due to insufficient computer memory, the Library's automation specialist suggested purchase of additional hardware which would have
cost several thousand dollars. Instead, the ABSEES staff found a way around the problem by switching to Reflex 2.0 software (cost: $80). Reflex 2.0 will provide adequate computer memory for the project's needs for the years ahead.

III. AUTOMATION

A. CONFIGURATION OF THE ABSEES MICROCOMPUTER SYSTEM

1. Hardware:

- Compaq 286 (256k/1.2)
- Hitachi upgrade (640k)
- Rhodime 20mb hard disk
- Compaq 360k floppy
- NEC Multisync color monitor
- Corona LP300 (laser printer)
- Hayes Smartcom II (internal modem)
- Hewlett Packard Laserjet series II
- Plus Hardcard 40

The Library of Congress supplied the project with the following additional equipment in 1988:

- Compaq 286
- NEC Multisync II monitor

2. Software:

- Reflex, the Analyst (by Borland)
- Reflex 2.0
- WordPerfect 4.2
- TeX (or LaTeX—a variation of TeX)
- DOS 3.1

B. DEVELOPMENT OF COMPILATION PROCEDURES USING A MICROCOMPUTER

1. Training of New Staff

Robert J. Palian, the automation liaison from the Music Division, continued to assist the ABSEES project with the development of its automated system. He trained the staff in TeX and LaTeX computer typesetting and acquainted them with the process of producing camera-ready copy for the 1986 volume.
2. Revised Procedures

a. ABSEES Manual

The staff continued to develop detailed guidelines for all stages of the Bibliography's production. New guidelines were drawn up for conventions of style and format. These guidelines help to ensure that entries will be made consistently the first time, and save a great deal of time in the editing stages.

b. Template

The Reflex template designed by the previous editor has been modified and improved. Since the separate fields could not be made to function as a flexible database, they were abandoned to eliminate duplication of data in a record. The template now consists of 19 fields allowed for text, which is composed much as it will appear in the manuscript except for the TeX typesetting codes imbedded by the inputter. The 20th field holds the subject code. TeX codes for cross references and names to be indexed are included at the end of the entry in the 19 text fields. If the editor decides to change a subject classification for an item, only the 20th field, holding the subject code, need be changed. The next time the material is sorted in Reflex, the item will automatically be arranged alphabetically under its new subject heading in the text.

c. Numeric Country and Subject Codes

Numeric country codes were abandoned, since the staff had no need to isolate material by country, and there were few requests for this service. Subject codes were reorganized to reflect suggestions received from the field and to make the division of subject classifications more consistent throughout the Bibliography. The first chapter (General) was reorganized to place topics, whose titles had changed over the years, once again into alphabetical order. Many new subject codes were added for individual literary figures. In the case especially of Russian and Polish literary figures - a large number of whom appear in the Bibliography each year - this measure saves time at the editing stage. The computer automatically isolates all entries for Tolstoy or Dostoevsky, e.g., eliminating the need for the editor to group them. The 1988 subject code list offers roughly 100 numeric codes for individual Russian-language authors. The staff continues to add new subject codes for individual authors in all areas as the need arises.

IV. THE 1986 VOLUME

Work on the 1986 volume, although interrupted by the change of editors, was completed between July 1987 and July 1988. As outlined above, the new staff produced the camera-ready copy with the help of Library automation personnel. This task, however, was accomplished only with difficulty, and it became apparent that the limited staff could not properly edit and
proofread the Bibliography as well as deal with the technical complexities of the computer software. As a result, the staff obtained professional assistance in typesetting the next volume.

The 1986 volume comprised 256 pages and more than 5,000 entries. The detailed table of contents, index, and cross references that appeared in previous volumes of the Bibliography were maintained in the 1986 volume in the same multi-column formats.

V. THE 1987 VOLUME

The 1987 volume was compiled and produced between July 1988 and May 1989. The staff used its past experience to refine procedures, making use of the advantages of both the old manual system and the new automation. Improved methods were devised for assembling the General Collections and Book Review sections of the Bibliography, and many of the computer procedures previously performed by the Library automation specialist were documented. Drafts of the 1987 volume were prepared by the professional typesetter and returned to the staff for substantive and stylistic editing, and for proofreading. The typesetter produced the index, and did much of the complicated combining and editing work required. Camera-ready copy of the manuscript was received by the publisher in early June 1989.

All features of the previous volume were maintained in the 1987 volume. Among its improvements, however, were new fonts for subject headings, which make individual sections at all levels easier to locate on the page; a better arrangement of the sections in Chapter 1; a more consistent arrangement of subsections throughout the text; and a new cover design. The 1987 volume contains 248 pages and more than 5,200 entries.

VI. THE 1988 VOLUME

Work was begun on the 1988 Bibliography in June 1989. The procedures developed by the staff over the previous year and a half have streamlined all aspects of the project and have noticeably improved the efficiency with which items on the 1988 volume are being compiled and processed. As of September 20, the staff (two full-time employees and a new, half-time graduate student intern) had compiled 2,700 items, 2,400 of which had been entered on computer disk. This represents approximately half of the minimum number of entries for this volume. The entries on the disk have received a preliminary editing (for subject classification and annotations) and proofreading (for format, style, and spelling). In addition, the staff has developed a file of roughly 2,000 monograph titles. Several hundred of these have been classified for main subject and cross references. About 1,500 book reviews (for monographs in the current volume and the 1987 volume) await inputting. The staff plans to close the 1988 volume by the end of calendar 1989, and to have it ready for publication in March 1990.
VII. THE 1989 VOLUME

A file has been established for monograph entries for the 1989 Bibliography. There are approximately 1,000 items in that file.

VIII. STAFF, ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL

A. ABSEES STAFF

There are presently two full-time employees on the ABSEES staff, the editor, who began work in January 1988, and the bibliographic assistant provided by the Library, who started work on the project in June of 1987.

B. GRADUATE STUDENT ASSISTANT

Through the assistance of the National Council on Soviet and East European Research, a part-time (6 month) Library position for a bibliographic/research assistant was created for the ABSEES project. A graduate student at the Sino-Soviet Institute of George Washington University was hired for this position and began work in June 1989. The arrangement proved beneficial both for the full-time staff and the student, who has found the work a valuable and rewarding learning experience.

C. OTHER ASSISTANCE BY LC EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

During the preparation of the 1986 and 1987 volumes, several Library employees - catalogers, bibliographers, and area specialists - who work in other parts of the Library volunteered their time to screen journals in their languages or areas of expertise. Also, four Library automation specialists, in addition to Robert Palian, contributed their time and experience to help solve problems in the development of the Bibliography's computer system.

IX. THE FUTURE OF ABSEES

Current plans call for the production and publication of one volume of ABSEES every year. There is no plan for changes in the 1988 or 1989 volumes. However, if additional staff assistance can be secured, it may become possible to expand the Bibliography's coverage with the 1990 volume. It may be feasible then to transfer to a different type of database such as ProCite, which would enhance possibilities for the dissemination of data and would allow cumulation of volumes of the Bibliography. In view of the expansion of publications in the Soviet and East European field, these innovations would be particularly welcome.