The Lewis and Clark Expedition: a Pathfinder

COREY JOHNSON

Introduction

The work we are now doing is, I trust, done for posterity, in such a way that they need not repeat it... We shall delineate with correctness the great arteries of this great country; those who come after us will... fill up the canvas we begin. (Thomas Jefferson)

The atmosphere was electric. With the purchase of the Louisiana Territory, the country had more than doubled its size. President Thomas Jefferson had envisioned a nation of farmers from sea to sea, and now these young United States were well on their way. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, two intelligent and adventurous military officers, were appointed to lead an expedition; their fifty-man team became known as the Corps of Discovery. Jefferson had an ambitious set of goals for this pioneering set of troops. Their mission was to scientifically describe the land, especially its flora and fauna; to make contact with Indian leaders and inform them about their new leader in Washington; and to learn about fur trading possibilities. Paramount was the aim to discover the last link of the mysterious Northwest Passage, the all-water route between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Over the course of the two-year expedition, the persevering group courageously fulfilled all parts of its mission. The only area where they may have been criticized for falling short was in failing to discover a Northwest Passage. Even in this area, however, their contribution was great, since they correctly concluded there was no such all-water route.

The expedition included a voyage to the far headwaters of the Missouri, several treks over the rugged Rocky Mountains, and exploration of the Columbia River basin. Later generations have praised the expedition for its multicultural and gender related successes. The Lewis and Clark Expedition included a scene where the first black person in American History exercised the right to suffrage, and even as the expedition exposed the Corps of Discovery to hundreds of Native Americans from many tribes, there were only a few skirmishes. The Shoshoni woman, Sacajawea, provided key leadership to the expedition, and in early 1805, a Nez Perce woman saved the expedition from likely destruction. Many say Lewis and Clark discovered the American future and taught later generations that if we work together, anything is possible. 2004 – 2006 mark the bicentennial years of the Lewis and Clark Expedition; it is sure to be a time of great excitement as people remember and celebrate this first expedition in U.S. History.

LC Subject Headings:
These subject headings are placed under three categories.

Lewis and Clark Expedition:
- Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-1806)
- Lewis and Clark Expedition - - Pictorial Works
- West (U.S.) - - Discovery and Exploration
- West (U.S.) - - Discovery and Exploration - - Pictorial Works
- West (U.S.) - - History - - To 1848 - - Sources
- Natural History - - West (U.S.)

Key Characters and Groups of the Lewis and Clark Expedition:
- Lewis, Meriwether, 1774-1809
- Lewis, Meriwether, 1774-1809 - - Diaries
- Clark, William, 1770-1838
- Clark, William, 1770-1838 - - Diaries
- Explorers - - West (U.S.) - - Biography - - Diaries
- Sacajawea, 1786-1884

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Modern Lewis and Clark Trails, Sites, and
General Geography:

- West (U.S.) - - Description and Travel
- Historic Sites - - West (U.S.)
- Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail

Books About the Lewis and Clark Expedition:

Each of these resources covers the complete journey and
does so with passion and grace. These are among the classic
texts concerning the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

  Passionate is a good word to describe this contribution. In this work one sees the expedition in a most adventuresome way, through the eyes of Lewis. This book also covers Thomas Jefferson's visions of the American West and Lewis' post-expedition years.

  The writing of this text was interrupted by WWII, as Bakeless served in the military. Concerns about Indian relations, science, and imperialism were put aside as Lewis and Clark were described a folk heroes in this classic narrative.

  Ronda is considered to be one of the top scholars concerning the Lewis and Clark Expedition. This book is a collection of essays that provide special insights into the thoughts of Thomas Jefferson about the American West. It also offers numerous perspectives that challenge the reader to see beyond that actions and ideas of the two famous explorers.

  Ronda's contribution is critical in that it sheds light on the many facets of the relations between the Native Americans and the expedition. Ronda argues that the Indians did an equal amount of the exploration as the Corps of Discovery passed through their lands. Suddenly the voyage was more about contributions from a choir of voices than a small ensemble.

Biographical Works About the Important Characters of the Expedition:

None of these works provide a broad enough scope to merit description. However, they are valuable supplemental sources to scholars of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.


Key Diaries, Records, Papers and Journals
Sources of the Expedition:

Lewis and Clark are described as the "writingest explorers". Scholars wanting to learn of the quest directly from its participants will need to consult one or more of the works below.

  In the years shortly after the voyage ended, Thomas Jefferson anxiously awaited Lewis' three-volume report. The report never came as Lewis committed suicide in 1809. Clark worked with Biddle in order to get the report done. This 1814 narrative was the story of the expedition as a western adventure. It did not sell well and included no mention of the scientific contributions, but nonetheless, it was the first book written about the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

  This work was published for the centennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. The American Philosophical Society and Dodd, Mead, and Company sought out the services of Thwaites, as he was a budding documentary editor. Thwaites' contribution was based on the idea that Lewis and Clark opened the west for settlement and opened thought to increased inquiry about the scientific contributions of the expedition.

  This comprehensive work contains 428 documents, over half of them previously unpublished. Some of the newly published items included Sergeant John Ordway's diary, Lewis' Ohio River journals and the valuable Biddle Notes. The Biddle Notes are a summary of a comprehensive interview and debriefing Clark gave to Nicholas Biddle in 1810. Jackson's work is monumental because his skillfully written annotations spurred other scholars to look at the expedition in the areas of science, Native American relations, and international diplomacy.

This is the most comprehensive work on the Lewis and Clark Expedition ever published. It includes nearly every written scrap of information associated with the journey. Highlighted contents include a series of rediscovered journals; field notebooks; miscellaneous papers, tables, charts and sheets; and all the maps. Even the journals kept by some to the minor players in the expedition are present. Moulton's efforts were aided by nearly a dozen institutions and hoards of specialists. In this work, locations throughout the journey are given correspondence to the nearest U.S. town and there are significant ethnographic and linguistic contributions. This work is the best way to learn about Lewis and Clark in all their roles: as adventurers, cartographers, geographers, diplomats, ethnographers, and scientists.

- Bergon, Frank. Wilderness Aesthetics. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press
  This work is the edition of "The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition" due to be completed in 2003. Strong points of this new 13-volume edition will include more valuable maps and a clearer arrangement of the entries.

Specialized Studies on Different Aspects of the Expedition:

The members of expedition were to report on every aspect of life west of the Mississippi River. Scholars from many diverse disciplines have analyzed the expedition.

  Cutright was the first scientist to write about the scientific contributions of Lewis and Clark. He concluded that their scientific discoveries were outstanding. This work includes modern scientific classification of their historical scientific findings.

  This book focuses on the geographical nature of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. First, Logan addresses the issue of geographical images that Jefferson and the explorers had

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Specialized Adult Sources:

  There are many quality encyclopedias addressing the topics of discoverers and explorers. This particular source has high merit concerning the Lewis and Clark Expedition. The writing is very scholarly, and post and pre expedition events are explained, and an informative map is also included. Most importantly, the entry contains a "Want to Know More" section, which includes a masterfully crafted list of key sources about the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Specialized Adult Sources:

The Lewis and Clark Expedition: cont.

This comprehensive work provides a Native American perspective on the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Although one could never get a complete picture of the expedition through this source, contacts with thirty-six different tribes are documented.


  The Lewis and Clark Expedition is mentioned forty-one times in this eight-volume work. It is particularly helpful if one wants to know more specifics about an aspect or characteristic of the expedition. For example, one can learn more about how horses were used during the expedition or how weather data was recorded.

**Bibliographies and Handbooks:**

After examining six reference works in this area, I concluded that only one merited inclusion in this pathfinder. The others all mentioned Lewis and Clark but referenced only one or two topical sources.


  The early American History section of this work is extensive. In addition, a helpful list of resources is provided in Patrick William’s (Columbia University) preface. Roughly half of the key authors on this topic are listed along with descriptions of their works.

**Journals:**

The following journals frequently have articles about Lewis and Clark.

- **American West.** Cupertino, Calif., American West Pub. Co., 1964-

- **Gateway Heritage.** St. Louis, Mo.: Missouri Historical Society, 1980-

- **Great Plains Quarterly.** Lincoln, Neb.: Center for Great Plains Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1981-

- **Montana: The Magazine of Western History.** Helena, Mt.: Montana Historical Society, 1955-

- **Oregon Historical Quarterly.** Portland, Or.: Oregon Historical Society, 1926-

- **Prologue.** Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Record Service, 1969-

- **We Proceeded On.** Portland, Or.: Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, 1975-

**Abstracts and Indexes:**

These electronic databases are the principal tool for finding recent scholarly writing about the Lewis and Clark Expedition. They point the way to hundreds of articles, reviews, and dissertations.

- **America: History and Life**

  Publisher: ABC-ClioInc., Santa Barbara, CA, 1998
  URL: open.academic.n2k.com/p/P0038BB.htm

  **Coverage:** 1964-present. **Updated:** Monthly. **General Description:** America: History and Life is a comprehensive bibliographic reference to the history of the United States and Canada. The database comprises almost 400,000 bibliographic entries and covers over 2000 journals. Searches can easily be refined and a wide variety of document types exist including: articles, book reviews, collections, dissertations, and media reviews.

- **Lewis and Clark Connection:** At the time of the completion of this pathfinder (January 2003), this database contained more than 350 relevant references to works about Lewis and Clark.

**CD-ROMs and Diskettes:**

The information available from the CD-ROMs listed below is basically in line with the information retrievable from the encyclopedias. However, each provides a different perspective and area of expertise.

- **The American Indian: A Multimedia Encyclopedia**


- **Westward Expansion**


**Reviews:**

There is an abundance of reviews, which evaluate individual works. A large portion of these reviews can be found in the journals listed in this pathfinder. Below is a comprehensive review of Lewis and Clark monographs.


  Beyond reviews of specific works on Lewis and Clark, this review addresses all major works written or compiled about Lewis and Clark since the expedition.

**Audio Visual Materials:**

There are myriad short instructional videos about Lewis and Clark. An acclaimed video series on the Expedition is listed below.

**cont.**
The Lewis and Clark Expedition: cont.


This four-hour production is outstanding. It features breathtaking scenery, and animated and insightful commentary from experts on Lewis and Clark history.

Maps and Atlases:

Lewis and Clark produced an astonishing number of maps. Most of the book sources listed in this bibliography contain some of their maps. Below are some key map and atlas resources outside the scope of the main texts.


This is the cardinal map resource concerning the Lewis and Clark Expedition. In sum, there are 126 maps, each with accompanying notes. The introduction provides historical background information for each of the six map section areas. Of particular interest is the section titled, “Sketches from Indian Information.” Five index maps in the preliminaries overlay the historical maps on a modern political map.


This work contains a valuable set of highly informative maps. It features period maps from most of the great explorers of the American West including Lewis and Clark. One learns that the way one explorer maps an area can be quite different from another.


Like many other explorer atlases, this one has a two-page entry on the Lewis and Clark Expedition. This work also has references to five other areas, which give the expedition historical perspective. There is an excellent section titled, “Forerunners of Lewis and Clark.”

WWW Resources:

World Wide Web sources can provide both depth and breadth. Below is a set of quality sources to consult when seeking information about how the Lewis and Clark Expedition continues to have an impact on American Society today.

- Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation
  www.lewisandclark.org/index.htm

This foundation’s site includes facts about membership in the organization as well as the expedition and new articles of interest. An internal link leads one to the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail (National Park Service) at www.nps.gov/lecl/. This site contains a great deal of current information about the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. It provides comprehensive contact information about federal, state, and local trail areas. It also includes advice on everything from commercial trips to the best bookstores for Lewis and Clark materials.

- National Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Council
  www.lewisandclark200.org/

This is the official site of the organization assembled to head Lewis and Clark bicentennial events. One can obtain information concerning topics such as conservation projects, upcoming events, and employment opportunities.

- PBS: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery Web Site
  www.pbs.org/lewisandclark/

This is the companion site for Ken Burns’ documentary movie from PBS Online. Highlights include descriptions of all the Native American groups encountered, and interviews from expert historians. The general layout and use of graphics at this site are outstanding.

- Discovering Lewis and Clark
  www.lewis-clark.org/choice.htm

Discovering Lewis and Clark is about the issues and values shaping the Northwest as Lewis and Clark saw it, and some of the ways in which changing visions over the past 200 years have affected the land and the people. Its centerpiece is a 19-part overview of the expedition by Harry Fritz, Professor of History at the University of Montana.

- The Journals of Lewis and Clark
  xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/JOURNALS/toc.html

One can read an abridged version of the journals of Lewis and Clark at this Web site. This informative collection of 28 chapters was created through the Department of American Studies at the University of Virginia. The site features keyword searching capabilities.

- The Lewis and Clark Trail
  www.lewisandclarktrail.com/

Explore with Lewis and Clark as they travel on their journey to the Pacific Ocean. This site provides a detailed historical account of the Corps of Discovery along the Lewis and Clark Trail. This site provides maps with outstanding detail, complete with modern town and roadway overlays.

- Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation
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