

Notes on the Text

Harold Innis's *Empire and Communications*, originally published by Clarendon Press in 1950, was a remarkable achievement. Given the paucity of material having direct relevance to the subject matter and the exigencies of conducting research in the immediate post-Second-World-War period, the task facing Innis was a daunting one. Mary Quayle Innis's 1972 revision of the text was no less remarkable. In addition to facing the challenge of deciphering Innis's illegible handwriting, she took it upon herself to both track down his sources and find the most recent versions of these that were available. The detailed references that she provided in the new set of footnotes are invaluable for the insights they provide into how Innis had planned to revise the volume. In order to make this material more accessible, these have been conjoined with the references in the text to form a new bibliography. This includes the sources for many of the unattributed names and statements that are scattered throughout the text.

The 1950 version contained an index, which largely seems to have been carried over to the 1972 version. However, it did not contain many references from the new notes added by Mary Quayle Innis. In this edition the index includes items from those notes, and overall, the number of entries has increased and more use has been made of subentries and cross references. Key works cited in the text have been referenced. In preparing the index, the one found in the project Gutenberg Canada Ebook version of *Empire and Communications* has been built upon.²⁷⁶ The material included in the bibliography and the index has been confined to that found in Innis's text to ensure that Innis's scholarship is considered separately from the commentary provided by the editor.

276 <https://gutenberg.ca/ebooks/innis-empire/innis-empire-00-h.html>. Accessed 16 August 2021.

The title of the introduction, “Reading *Empire and Communications*: Above and below the Line” captures its leitmotif.²⁷⁷ The inclusion of the new notes and footnotes by Mary Quayle Innis in the 1972 version of *Empire* represented an elaboration of the ideas advanced by Innis in the 1950 edition of the text. But at the same time, the new material heralded significant departures in the nature and scope of his historical enquiry. Unfortunately, these addenda have largely been overlooked, meaning that the text has yet to be understood in its totality. Accordingly, the new footnotes and notes drive the narrative for the introduction, with connections made to the main text wherever that is appropriate. How and why Mary Quayle Innis undertook the preparation of this material is explored in some detail. Given that how *Empire* came to be written and produced is yet another aspect of the largely “Unknown Innis,” the introduction traces its origins in his earlier work and in his engagement with the writing of “philosophical history.” Particular attention is given to his 1948 Beit lectures, emphasizing that this set of talks delivered at Oxford can best be understood as the point of reference for a cluster of presentations that he gave in Britain during the spring and summer of 1948.

The prefatory material from the previous version (including Marshall McLuhan’s forward) has been retained. The new introduction does not address the views expressed in the forward, valuable as they are. Errors found in the text have been silently corrected. It is hoped that the introduction, revisions, and added material make it possible for readers to better appreciate the meaning and significance of the text and to engage more effectively with the ideas and insights that Innis brought forward in this pioneering work.

I am grateful to Siobhan McMenemy (formerly of the University of Toronto Press and now of Wilfrid Laurier University Press) for kindly inviting me to write an introduction to a new version of Innis’s *Empire and Communications*. It has been a pleasure working with the current UTP acquisitions editor, Mark Thompson, whose assistance has been invaluable in bringing my work on the volume to fruition. I have very much appreciated the care and attention given to the production process by staff at UTP, including Stephanie Mazza, cover designer Michel Vrana, associate managing editor Leah Connor, as well as the book’s copy editor, Frances Mundy. In writing the introduction and preparing the new version, I have benefitted from the sage advice afforded to me by Charles Acland, Paul-Alain Beaulieu, Menahem Blondheim, Anne Innis Dagg, Arthur Kroker, Ross McKibbin, Jesse Lee Niquette-Buxton, Manon Niquette, John Durham Peters, Carol Selfridge, Michael Stamm, as well as members of the Media History Research Group at Concordia University, and of the University of

277 This formulation was suggested to me by Jonathan Bordo, with reference to Innis’s *Fur Trade in Canada*.

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