

reviews

Atlas of Oregon, Second Edition

By Loy, William G. (editor); Allen, Stuart; Buckley, Aileen R.; Meacham, James E. (authors)
University of Oregon Press, 2001
301 pages More than 700 maps,
hundreds of charts and diagrams
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When a review copy of the *Atlas of Oregon, Second Edition* arrived, it was received with anticipation since many positive comments regarding it had been heard. Paging through the atlas proved those expectations to be warranted since it is a visual feast. It was quickly realized that for greatest enjoyment, the atlas should be perused slowly—one topic or two topics at a sitting. It is well designed for this approach. The atlas will continue to reside on an easy-to-reach bookshelf for frequent examination of the myriad masterful maps, diagrams, and textual entries found in its approximately 300 pages.

The *Atlas of Oregon, Second Edition's* appearance is tastefully plain and gives an early indication of the atlas's quality. The opening pages, including an especially spacious and readable table of contents, are generally unadorned. The only graphics on these pages are two differently sized versions of the state seal. The atlas is pleasantly compact given the amount of material it contains. The reader need not be a body-builder or a contortionist to place the atlas on his or her lap and comfortably page through it, even over a lengthy period of time. The materials of the atlas seem adequately durable. The

paper is of sufficient weight and seems to be of good quality. It holds colors well and its texture is suitable for reproduction of the delicate details found in some graphics and in fine lines of text characters. As the reader turns a page, contents of the next or previous pages are faintly visible through the paper, but not to the point of distraction.

The pages are nicely laid out. They maintain a good balance of graphic and textual elements. The elements keep the pages interesting and interrelate well so the content does not seem gratuitous. The page designers have made good use of color and white-space. The pages are able to "breathe" even though a large number of them contain a high density of graphics and text.

The atlas is colorful without becoming garish. In nearly all cases the colors are appropriately and tastefully chosen. This is no small feat given the atlas's large number of maps and graphics with multiple colors.

From the standpoint of graphic legibility, the atlas fares quite well. The black type is distinct against the details of background graphics. There are occasional examples of colored type not reading clearly against a colored or detailed background. One such example can be found on the "Landforms: Shaded Relief" map. This map contains colored county lines and type that will likely be problematic for many readers of the atlas to distinguish against the relief background. There is also a significant amount of small-sized type that might require readers with eyesight disadvantages to use magnification.

It is interesting to compare the *Atlas of Oregon, Second Edition* with the *Atlas of Oregon, First Edition*. At first glance one sees the significant difference in the physical sizes of the two books. The *Second Edition* is considerably

more compact. The page orientation of the two editions has also changed. The *Second Edition* has a vertical orientation whereas the *First Edition* was oriented horizontally.

The authors note that the *Atlas of Oregon, Second Edition* differs from the *First Edition* by containing more maps and less text. As one compares the two editions of the atlas, the *Second Edition* quickly confirms the authors' statement regarding the number of maps. It is less evident if the *Second Edition* contains less text since it is more efficiently placed and different fonts are used.

In a direct comparison of maps from the two atlases, the difference that will no doubt have the strongest impression upon any reader is the striking graphic quality of the maps in the *Second Edition*. They are technically executed to be of the top-notch caliber one would expect from the persons involved in its design and production. Since some of the producers of the *Second Edition* were also involved in the production of the *First Edition*, it becomes a glowing testament to their development as cartographic designers along with their abilities to select and direct capable cartographic technicians to produce an atlas of this exceptional quality.

The *Atlas of Oregon, Second Edition* is comprised of three main sections. The first section (approximately two-thirds of the atlas) contains thematic maps and associated text and diagrams. This section has three divisions: *Human Geography*, *The Economy*, and *Physical Geography*. The second section contains 81 pages of *Reference Maps*. These include population center maps, historic growth maps and more generalized reference maps. The third section of the atlas is a *Reference* section which includes USGS map index pages, a gazetteer, an essay on place names, sources and index.

In reading the *Atlas of Oregon, Second Edition*, it is helpful that each set of facing pages is a self-contained topic. This enables the reader to read the text and study the related graphics without the distraction of turning pages ahead or back. The only activities requiring the reader to turn pages are when he or she moves to a new topic or compares between maps/topics. The upper left corner of each left page contains a header that shows the topic exactly as it appears in the *Table of Contents*. The reader is also assisted by an *Index* of key words at the end of the atlas. The combination of *Table of Contents*, headers, and the *Index* provide straightforward and adequate navigation assistance to readers.

Cross-referencing or map-comparison is an important use of any atlas. Readers examine multiple maps by comparing data in one location with the same or similar data in other locations. They might also compare maps at different scales in order to gain understanding of locations. Readers are as likely to perform map-comparison as they are to confine examination to a single map. When readers of the *Atlas of Oregon, Second Edition* wish to perform cross-referencing or map-comparison, they must be prepared for a considerable amount of page-turning. This is due to the number of maps in the atlas and the varying scales of maps the reader might wish to compare. This is not an unusual problem regarding atlases nor is it unusually problematic in this atlas. Since the reader does not find reference maps until the final third of the atlas, a large number of pages must be turned if reference maps are consulted for additional locational information while thematic maps are being studied in the front part of the book. Map-comparison of this nature could be improved with inclusion of a state-wide general reference map near the front of

the book.

The thematic portion of the atlas contains material covering an interdisciplinary range of subjects. Historians will find material related to early maps of Oregon, Native American history, early exploration and settlement, immigration, social and political development, population growth, and place name origins. Human geographers and social scientists will find material related to immigration, population growth, race and ethnicity, and several additional topics related to the social development of Oregon. Economic geographers and economists will find material related to a variety of sectors and occupational components of Oregon's economy. Physical geographers and scientists will find material related to Oregon's landforms, geologic history, soils, water, vegetation, wildlife, and climate. The topics covered in the thematic portion of the atlas are treated with striking maps and diagrams that invite careful examination. The interrelationship between text and graphics is evident. Each successfully supplements the other.

The *Introduction* to the atlas states that very little information from the 2000 census was available in time to be included and that the date of "most recent" information varies from subject to subject. Examples of this variation readily appear. Readers will find "most recent" year labels on graphics ranging from 1990 to 2000, with most seeming to fall in the late 1990s and 2000. There is an instance in the review copy of the atlas where proportional symbols are labeled with year 2000 population totals by county and appear inconsistent with bar graphs on the same page that also show year 2000 population data for each county. This was the most puzzling instance encountered involving variation of "most recent" information.

Readers who are serious about

researching Oregon will appreciate the reference materials in the final section of the atlas. Of special value to researchers is the *Sources* section containing bibliographic information for each topic found in the atlas.

The *Atlas of Oregon, Second Edition* authors note the atlas is an attempt to illustrate and explain, by use of maps, the "essential nature of Oregon." It is also intended to be a reference that presents information in map form that previously existed only in tables, lists, and text. Finally the atlas is intended to be a tribute from the authors to the State of Oregon.

In this reviewer's opinion, the authors have accomplished their goals. The contents of the atlas portray the nature of Oregon in its historical, social, cultural, economic and physical complexity. The sheer number of colorful, well-designed maps and diagrams indicate that a considerable amount of non-graphic information has undergone a graphic conversion. The result is an attention-grabbing and fascinating tool for the study of Oregon. This seems a very fitting tribute to the beautiful state of Oregon. Apart from the addition of a state reference map in an early chapter and some graphic reworking of lines and text against the visual details of relief maps, there is little else one could wish to change about the atlas. Examination of the *Atlas of Oregon, Second Edition* finds it to be a superb atlas that is most highly recommended. It will likely become (and may already be) the standard against which forthcoming state atlases will be measured.