Overview

There is no comprehensive archive, bibliography, or collection of Mormon speeches, sermons, or public address. A single bibliographic source (Walker and Whittaker, 2000) contains a section devoted to secondary studies on Mormon speech or speakers, but is largely limited to historical studies that are incidentally rhetorical in nature. A new resource, The Mormon Literature Database (http://MormonLit.lib.byu.edu), is slated to include Mormon speeches and sermons, as well as references to any criticism of Mormon oratory, but so far has only 250 speeches entered.

Although Brigham Young University both generates and archives an extensive range of Mormon speeches through their weekly devotional and forum addresses and numerous ecclesiastical, community, and academic conferences (Especially for Youth, Women’s Conference, Education Week, Sperry Symposia, Literature and Belief Colloquia, Life, the Universe, and Everything Science Fiction Symposia, and numerous ad hoc conferences hosted by Religious Studies, various colleges, or Continuing Education), there is no centralized record of such speeches, which are variously recorded, printed, and distributed for commercial resale but not for academic study. KBYU maintains a list of current speeches and their broadcast availability, and at http://speeches.byu.edu can be found print and some audio versions of devotional and forum speeches (but only insofar as these are in print and available commercially).

BYU’s Harold B. Lee library has generated some indices to some speech collections (BYU Speeches of the Year, etc.), but there has been no concerted effort by any reference librarians or specialists in Mormon studies to track Mormon speeches centrally. The L. Tom Perry Special Collections and the HBLL acquisitions policy work to collect Mormon material, but there are no finding aids or central bibliographic resources spanning the range of Mormon speaking. Hence, at BYU’s library one can find haphazardly audio and video recordings of many (but not all) General Conferences, devotionals and forums, or texts of these and other common venues for Mormon speaking.

Secondary studies are even more disparate, ranging from specialized indices and bibliographies, to incidental commentary on speaking in biographical sources. There are a score of theses or dissertations of a rhetorical or stylistic nature studying the speaking of Mormons in the 19th and 20th centuries; other academic assessments occur incidentally to folkloristics and history. Curiously, the Quarterly Journal of Speech has published an article on early Mormon theater, but nothing on the extensive history of Mormon speaking. Essentially, Mormon oratory does not exist as an academic study, despite the fact that at least 8000 General Conference addresses have been published. And while the speaking methods of Church authorities have become the subjects of a handful of theses, dissertations, and academic articles, only certain ethnographic or folklore studies have explored the more common experience of Mormon speaking at the local level (More than 20,000 Mormon sermons are given every week of the year in LDS congregations).
Primary Texts

As mentioned above, primary texts are scattered given the breadth of Mormon oratory. However, for certain genres of Mormon speaking (such as the General Conference address or the BYU Devotional or Forum address), there are more centralized compilations (and some indexing and searching). Major collections are indicated here, with secondary criticism or indexing apparatus indicated:

The Journal of Discourses


Complete texts also available online in plain text files (http://www.mormonismi.net/jod/), and in searchable form on the *New Mormon Studies CD-ROM* (Salt Lake City: Smith Research Associates, 1998)


A selection of the “best” discourses from the Journal of Discourses, with added scriptural references and editorial notes.


A listing of discourses by subject. An essential resource for study in the *Journal of Discourses*.


Murphy, Steven M. *Index to the Journal of Discourses Containing Unique Doctrinal Themes*. Salt Lake City, 1974. Call No: BX 8630.J82m (HUM REF and SPEC COLL)

This index lists the discourses on about 60 different subjects, including Education, Family Government, Birth Control, Signs of the Times, Storing Supplies, and more.

*Brigham Young Addresses: A Chronological Compilation of Known Addresses of the Prophet Brigham Young*, Ed. Elden J. Watson. Call No. BX8647.Y8416


The Journal of Discourses was discontinued in 1886, and the *Collected Discourses* picks up where the Journal left off after the brethren came out of hiding from the polygamy persecutions and were able to speak in public again. All sermons in *Collected Discourses* were recorded in their entirety, and there is a scripture bibliography at the end of each volume. There are historical footnotes, and spelling variations have been left
uncorrected. There is no complete index for this collection (based on subject, author, or other, although the volumes are in chronological order).


A book review of the Collected Discourses, explaining the basic content of each volume (of interest, the 2nd and 3rd volumes cover the time period when the Manifest was issued). He says that the collection does “not include[e] writing of prominent women of the time” and that he looks forward to a comprehensive index when the six volumes are completed.


This is a three volume series of discourses by the prophets and presidents of the church while they were in the office of president of the church. It only contains addresses given to the Church as a whole. Speeches are organized by speaker, and include a picture, chronology, speaker biography, and addresses. Includes subject index.

Electronic Text Collections

While hampered by crude searching interfaces and a lack of conventions for annotating and manipulating documents, these are nevertheless indispensable collections of otherwise unavailable primary texts. Currently, BYU is in the process of digitizing many core Mormon texts, including The Journal of Discourses and the considerable body of issues published by The Millennial Star.

GospelLink 2001 CD-ROM [Available at HBLL]

Includes full text of BYU Speeches of the Year (1960-66); BYU Studies (1959-97); LDS Conference Reports (1898-1970); Evening and Morning Star (1832-34); FARMS Journal of Book of Mormon Studies (1992-97); Improvement Era (1897-1955); Millennial Star (1840-46); LDS Church News (1988-98); Messenger and Advocate (1834-37); Times and Seasons (1839-45)

New Mormon Studies CD-ROM [Available at HBLL]

Collected Discourses Volumes 1-5; Conference Reports of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1880-1970); Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought; Elders' Journal of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints; Journal of Discourses Volumes 1-26; Nauvoo Expositor; Sunstone; The Evening and the Morning Star; The Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate; The Seer; Times and Seasons

Mormon Periodicals

Institutional LDS periodicals are an important primary source for speeches. Often, as in The Times and Seasons, sermons were paraphrased. Later, publications such as the Deseret News carried full texts of various speeches. Not all of these LDS periodicals have been verified as to whether they include Mormon speeches or sermons. They are listed chronologically (for the most part). Information about each of them can be found through the HBLL catalog or the Mormon Literature Database (http://MormonLit.lib.byu.edu – click on “Periodicals”)
The Evening and Morning Star (Published both in Independence, Missouri from June 1832-July 1833, and in Kirtland Ohio from December 1833-September 1834)

The Upper Missouri Advertiser (Published in Independence Missouri in 1833)

The Messenger and Advocate (Published in Kirtland, Ohio, October 1834-September 1837)

The Millennial Star (Also, "Latter-day Saints Millenial Star"). (Published in Liverpool England) Call No. BX8605.5.M61 (Periodicals); M205.5 M61 (Special Collections/Vault); BX8605.5.M61 (Microfiche)

Latter Day Saints' Elder's Journal (Published in Far West, Missouri in 1838)

The Elders Journal

The Mormon (Published in New York)

The Seer (Published in Washington)

The Luminary (Published in St. Louis)

The Nauvoo Neighbor (Published in Nauvoo, Illinois)

The Times and Seasons (Published in Nauvoo, Illinois from 1839-1846)

The Frontier Guardian (Published in Kanesville, Utah)

The Deseret News. Call No. BX8605.1.D45 (Special Collections / Americana)

The Contributor (Published in Salt Lake City, Utah)

The Juvenile Instructor

The Woman's Exponent

Utah Magazine

The Young Woman's Journal (Published in Salt Lake City, Utah)

The Relief Society Magazine (Published in Salt Lake City, Utah)

The Improvement Era (Published in Salt Lake City, Utah)

The Ensign (Published in Salt Lake City, Utah from 1970-present)

Exponent II (Published since 1973)

Sunstone (Published since 1975)

Dialogue (See the "From the Pulpit" section)

The Children's Friend

The Friend (Published in Salt Lake City, Utah)
The Book of Mormon and Oratory

The Book of Mormon itself is a key primary text for Mormon oratory, although studies about the following major speeches are oriented to their religious content, rather than their rhetoric. Still, some linguistically or rhetorically oriented studies of Book of Mormon speeches have been done, as indicated:

**Book of Mormon Speeches**

These are speeches in the Book of Mormon listed by West, Emerson Roy. How to Speak in Church. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976. (BX 8647.1 W52h)

- Mosiah 2-4 (King Benjamin)
- Mosiah 15-16 (Abinadi)
- Alma 34 (Amulek)
- Helaman 13-15 (Samuel)
- 3 Nephi 11-17 (Christ)
- Alma 5,7,9,12,32,33,40,41 (Alma)

Turner, Floy L. Prophecies and Sermons from the Book of Mormon. Provo: J. Grant Stevenson, ?.

This book isn't too helpful. It is just an arrangement of scriptures organized by prophecies and sermons. It doesn't give any added insight to the entries. However, breezing through the Table of Contents may provide ideas on where sermons are found in the Book of Mormon.


This book would be a beneficial source to anyone interested in studying Book of Mormon sermons. This is an abridged version of King Benjamin's Speech: That Ye May Learn Wisdom made for an easier reading. Each chapter discusses some aspect of King Benjamin or his speech. Most of the chapters are written by John W. Welch but other contributors include Neal A. Maxwell, and Hugh W. Nibley among others. Although all of the chapters seem interesting and insightful, there are a couple that seem the most beneficial: "Benjamin's Speech: A Masterful Oration," "Benjamin's Sermon as a Traditional Ancient Farewell Address," and "Parallelism and Chiasmus in Benjamin's Speech."


This is the longer version of the source above. It includes one additional chapter and extended versions of the other chapters. The extra chapter could be helpful. It is called "The Use of King Benjamin's Address by Latter-day Saints."


This book gives an annotated bibliography of secondary resources on the Book of Mormon including articles, book reviews, periodicals, books, pamphlets, and more. It has an easy to use index by topic in the back. In the index can be found relevant topics to Mormon oratory such as the literary value of the Book of Mormon, oral tradition, and Sermon on the Mount.
Secondary Sources - Indexes and Critical Studies of Mormon Oratory

As indicated in the overview, secondary sources on Mormon oratory are scattered among various finding aids (topical indexes) and historical studies, with only a few studies dedicated to a primarily rhetorical assessment—and those are usually framed as studies of a given individual and (less occasionally) a given venue or genre of Mormon speaking (such as Lowe, under “Miscellaneous” below). Some attention has been given to the Mormon funeral sermon as a separate speaking genre. However, most secondary sources are dissertations or theses (none of which has been published by an academic or popular press) that are focused on the rhetoric of a given speaker. Occasionally an academic article has appeared on the speaking style of a specific Church authority, but no general histories, taxonomies, or assessments of traditions apart from historical studies such as Higdon and Bitton.

Funeral Sermons


Joseph Smith as Speaker/Preacher

Among many studies of individual speakers, Joseph Smith stands out as a special object of study. As the founder of the Latter-day Saints, his persona and speaking style were vital elements in the beginnings of Mormonism. There are both primary and secondary texts available on Joseph Smith, though many of these still are incidentally, rather than centrally, rhetorical in nature

Primary Sources


This book, with forward by Marvin S. Hill, acknowledges Dean Jessee's research regarding the questionable reliability of accounts of Joseph Smith's sermons due to heavy editing of often incomplete transcripts. This compilation of many of his sermons and writings has taken care to present writings that are unquestionably Joseph Smith's, and offers them in their original manuscript or early published forms. Much of the contradictions, digressions, etc. that have been edited out of official versions are preserved in this volume.


Contains personal reflections, sermons, revelations, translations and prayers of Joseph Smith. Retains original spelling and punctuation, except in those sources now canonized or published officially by the Church. The section on sermons is actually quite small, but contains several sermons from the Lectures on Faith series (including the King Follett discourse.)

Smith, Joseph F., ed. Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith Taken from his sermons and writings as they are found in the Documentary History and other publications of the Church and written or published in the days of the Prophet's ministry. 21st ed. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book
Co., 1972. BX 8630 .Sm61t 1972 (found in Hum - Ref)

Arranged first chronologically, and secondarily by topic. Lacks scholarly sourcing that might indicate who transcribed or edited the sermons or selections of sermons.


Very similar to Joseph F. Smith's compilation. Also arranged by topic with very few sources. Doesn't reference where or when sermons were given.

Secondary Studies


Excellent article on the fallibility of those who attempted to preserve the sermons of Joseph Smith. Problems include long periods of time between the recording of transcripts (often containing only 5-25% of any given sermon) and the editing of them into fuller versions, biases of the editors that influence the finished text, the fact that Joseph Smith spoke extemporaneously, so there were no drafts to help document his discourses, etc. He also succeeds, however, in identifying distinguishing features of Joseph Smith's own style. A very important article.

Smith, C.N., “A Critical Analysis of the Public Speaking of Joseph Smith, First President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints” (Ph.D. diss, 1965) [BX 8670.2 .Sm59c; also in Spec. Coll.]

Smith, C.N., “Joseph Smith as a Public Speaker” (Improvement Era, 1966). [BX 8605.1 .Im7]


Studies of Individual LDS Speakers (besides Joseph Smith)


Brigham Young

Meyers, C.K., “A Critical Analysis and Appraisal of the Work of Brigham Young as a Public Speaker” (Ph.D. diss., 1940) [BX No.17 Pt.8. microfilm]

Meyers, C.J., “Brigham Young As a Public Speaker” (Improvement Era, 1941)


Parley P. Pratt


Orson Pratt


George Q. Cannon


George A. Smith


Matthew Cowley


Hugh B. Brown


Reed Smoot


Heber C. Kimball


J. Reuben Clark, Jr.

Ezra Taft Benson

Paul H. Dunn

John Taylor

Spencer W. Kimball

[Author unidentified]: “Spencer W. Kimball as Extemporaneous Speaker” (BYU Studies, 1985).

David O. McKay
Armstrong, R.N., “An Ideas Centered Approach to a Critical Analysis of the Public Speaking of David O. McKay: Ninth President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (Ph.D. diss., 1978)
Studies of Individual Speeches

Even more rare than studies of individual Mormon speakers are studies of seminal speeches by Latter-day Saints (compare the study of Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address” or Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech). One exception is the King Follett sermon, which has received considerable scholarly attention both in establishing the text of that speech and understanding its content. Even so, these studies are historical or doctrinal in nature, rather than rhetorical or aesthetic. What follows is an example bibliography of a more fully studies speech in the history of Mormon oratory:

The King Follett Sermon: A Bibliography

Overview

The King Follett sermon, delivered 7 April, 1844, has had significant attention from Mormon scholars due to its doctrinal and historical content. Versions of the primary text are broadly available and since 1978, all depend upon the amalgamated text of the speech described and edited by Donald Q. Cannon in his *BYU Studies* article. The significant amount of secondary literature about the sermon is mostly historical or doctrinal in character, with some minor attention given to its rhetorical style (England) and literary qualities ("Davidic Chiasmus").

Primary Texts (listed chronologically)


Secondary Texts

Jessee, Dean C. "Priceless Words and Fallible Memories: Joseph Smith as Seen in the Effort To Preserve His Discourses." BYU Studies 31.2 (Spring 1991)
Lyon, T. Edgar. "Doctrinal Development of the Church During the Nauvoo Sojourn, 1839-1846," BYU Studies 15 (Summer 1975)

Secondary Texts - Miscellaneous

Burton, Gideon O. “Twentieth-Century Mormon Eloquence: A Stylistic Analysis of Two Sermons by Neal A. Maxwell". http://english.byu.edu/faculty/burtong/Courses/495/BURTMAX.HTM