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Winner Reference category, 2011 Eric Hoffer Book Award

Aerial Aces of the Universal Newsreel, Phillip W. Stewart, PMS Press - In the introduction to this book the author confesses his love of early aviation and says that his goal in writing the book is to introduce others to a little-known resource, the MCA/Universal Newsreel Library Collection. Held by the National Archives branch in College Park, Maryland, the collection is open to researchers. In his introduction, Stewart elucidates both the positives and shortcomings of the collection. The main text of the book is a guide to the surviving aviation footage in the collection from 1929-1931. Each encyclopedic-style entry contains Story Line, Action, Script (noting if it is unavailable), Notes, and Data, the last section providing citations so that other researchers can follow in Stewarts footsteps to the original footage. According to Stewart, about one-fourth of the reels also had associated still photographs, and he has included many of those in the book; a few are included in the main body of the book, and most are at the end in a separate chapter entitled Photographs. The book ends with an appendix of the titles of the Universal Newsreel aviation stories that didn't survive, and it is indexed both by title and by subject. This book provides a fascinating window both into a little-known resource, the Universal Newsreel, and into the early world of aviation. The entries are interesting, and the photographs bring that long-ago world to life in a way that text alone cannot.