

The Wisconsin Idea

Compiled by Eileen Snyder, December 2007

www.legis.wisconsin.gov/lrb/pubs/tapthepower.htm

Most people who work for Wisconsin state government or the University of Wisconsin are familiar with the Wisconsin Idea; at least, most have heard the phrase. Over the years, it has had numerous interpretations, but the most commonly heard definition is that “the boundaries of the University are the boundaries of the state.” The Wisconsin Idea is not a particular set of reforms, but rather a more general framework for creating public policy. The origins of the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau are rooted in the Idea, as are the many outreach efforts of the University of Wisconsin. But the Wisconsin Idea also had a huge impact on national policy, inspiring the creation of the Congressional Research Service and fueling the Progressive era in the early 20th century. This bibliography presents works about the Wisconsin Idea, some of the policy it inspired, and the people who influenced its development.

History

9XM Talking: WHA Radio and the Wisconsin Idea / Randall Davidson. 2006. (384.6/D28) Davidson explores the history of the first educational radio station, which later became Wisconsin Public Radio, as an expression of the Wisconsin Idea’s doctrine of the University’s service to the citizens of the state.

The Arts and the Wisconsin Idea: A Conference Report / Community Arts Network. 2003. The report from a 2003 conference about how the Wisconsin Idea influenced the arts in Wisconsin. www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2003/12/report_on_the_a.php

“Progressivism and the Wisconsin Idea” / Wisconsin Historical Society. A part of the Wisconsin Historical Society’s “Turning Points in History” digital collection, this Web page provides links to primary documents relating to the Wisconsin Idea. www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/tp-036

The University of Wisconsin Colleges, 1919-1997: The Wisconsin Idea at Work / Jerry L. Bower. 2002. (377.5/B67) Bower traces the history of the UW Colleges, which he says have “starred as the epitome of the Wisconsin Idea.”—Page 4.

“Wisconsin Economists and New Deal Agricultural Policy: The Legacy of Progressive Professors” / Jess Gilbert and Ellen Baker, Wisconsin Magazine of History, Summer 1997, v.80, no.4, p.281-312. (977.5/G37) A history of the contributions of Wisconsin economists to Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal.

The Wisconsin Idea / Charles McCarthy. 1912. (354/W7m) The book in which the Wisconsin Idea was first described. www.library.wisc.edu/etext/wireader/WER1650-2.html

The Wisconsin Idea / Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau. 2006. (Governing Wisconsin, no.15) Part of a Wisconsin civics education series. www.legis.wi.gov/lrb/gw/gw_15.pdf

The Wisconsin Idea: A Bibliography / Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau. 2000. (Informational Memorandum 00-1) www.legis.wi.gov/lrb/pubs/im/00im1.pdf

“The Wisconsin Idea Carries On” / John Bird, The Country Gentleman, 1946. This digitized article from the 1940s discusses a project by the University of Wisconsin to modernize farming techniques. Located on the “Science Alliance” Web site. www.biotech.wisc.edu/outreach/alliance/1946

The Wisconsin Idea – A Tribute to Carlisle P. Runge: Proceedings of the Colloquium. March 28, 1981. (UW Ext/w) (library use only) Speeches and papers that were presented at the colloquium honoring Professor Runge, who was a proponent of the Wisconsin Idea. Topics covered include the history of the Wisconsin Idea and its meaning today.

The Wisconsin Idea: The University’s Service to the State / Jack Stark and The Wisconsin Idea for the 21st Century / Alan B. Knox and Joe Corry. 1996. (354/W7L) These articles, reprinted from the 1995-1996 *Wisconsin Blue Book*, offer a history of the Idea and a look at its future. www.legis.wi.gov/lrb/pubs/feature/wisidea.pdf

“Wisconsin Ideas” / John D. Buenker, The History of Wisconsin, Volume IV: The Progressive Era, 1893-1914, chapter 13, p.569-610. (Ref./977.5/W7a/pt.4) (library use only) Buenker presents a discussion of the Wisconsin Idea as it relates to the Progressive era. Includes a discussion of the people who first articulated the Idea.

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The Wisconsin Idea Continued

The Wisconsin Idea Today

Creating High-Tech Business Growth in Wisconsin: UW-Madison Technology Transfer & Entrepreneurship / Philip Z. Sobocinski. 1999. (338.01/W7) "This publication was prepared as an account of an academic study on University of Wisconsin-Madison basic research outcomes, technology transfer, entrepreneurship, and high-tech business creation benefiting industrial and economic development in Wisconsin."—Page 6.

"Robert E. Gard Wisconsin Idea Foundation." This Web site describes the foundation, which is "committed to helping people and their communities discover the vital role the arts play in their day-to-day lives." www.wisconsinacademy.org/gard

"The Wisconsin Idea" / University of Wisconsin-Madison. A Web site detailing how the Wisconsin Idea is applied today at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. www.wisconsinidea.wisc.edu

Legislative Reference

"100 Years of Information: Under the Leadership of Some Remarkable People, the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau Built Up a Fine Reputation Over the Past Century" / Garry Boulard, *State Legislatures*, v.27, no.8, 2001. (328.21/B66)

"Go and Tell the World: Charles R. McCarthy and the Evolution of the Legislative Reference Movement, 1901-1917" / Paul D. Healey, *Law Library Journal*, v.99, no.1, 2007. (328.21/H34) Healey explores the evolution of legislative reference services, with particular attention paid to the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Library and Charles McCarthy. www.aallnet.org/products/pub_llj_v99n01/2007-02.pdf

"The Growth of Reference Services and Special Librarianship and Its Consequences for Legislatures" / Samuel Rothstein, *Special Libraries*, Fall 1990, p.309-316. (328.21/R74)

"The Legislative Reference Library" / Rex Mitchell Baxter, *Arena*, June 1908, no.223, p.674-681. (328.21/B33) A contemporary account of the origins of the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Library and Charles McCarthy's part in its creation.

"Wisconsin's Idea: Legislative Reference Service – Library Established in 1901 Is Now LRB" / Marian G. Rogers, *Channel*, July/August 2001, v.36, no.6, p.14-15. (328.21/R63) <http://dpi.wi.gov/channel/pdf/chn3606.pdf>

People

"Charles McCarthy and Frederic C. Howe: Their Imperial German Sources for the Wisconsin Idea in Progressive Politics" / LaVern J. Rippley, *Monatshefte*, 1988, v.80, no.1. (354/R48) Rippley investigates the Imperial German influences for the Wisconsin Idea and progressivism.

***Charles McCarthy, Librarianship and Reform* / Marion Casey. 1981. (Ref./328.21/C26a) (library use only)** The biography of Charles McCarthy.

***Charles McCarthy, Policy Maker for an Era* (Ph.D. thesis) / Marion Casey. 1971. (Ref./328.21/C26b) (library use only)** The thesis that formed the basis for Casey's full-length biography of McCarthy.

***Charles Richard Van Hise: Scientist Progressive* / Maurice M. Vance. 1960. (920/V27)** The biography of the man who was president of the University of Wisconsin at the dawn of the 20th century, and who was one of the originators of the Wisconsin Idea.

"The 'Government Man': Edwin E. Witte of the University of Wisconsin" / David B. Johnson, *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Autumn 1998, v.82, no.1, p.32-51. (920/J63) Although Witte was not directly involved in creating the Wisconsin Idea, his years of service to the state and the University of Wisconsin embody that Idea. He was also a student of some of the early proponents of the Wisconsin Idea, and was chief of the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Library from 1922-1933.

***The La Follettes and the Wisconsin Idea* / Edward N. Doan. 1947. (329.81/D65)** This book discusses how Governor Robert M. La Follette and two of his sons carried the Wisconsin Idea beyond the borders of the state.

***McCarthy of Wisconsin* / Edward A. Fitzpatrick. 1944. (Ref./328.21/F58) (library use only)** The appendices of this biography include letters from McCarthy to Charles R. Van Hise and others.

***Myself, The Autobiography of John R. Commons* / John Rogers Commons. 1963. (330/C73a)** Commons was an economist at the University of Wisconsin; many of his students went on to lead the Progressive movement.

Clippings: (Available for use in the library only; clippings prior to 1970 are on microfiche)

- State government in Wisconsin: 354/W7z