2008

Book Reviews -- Monographic Musings

Debbie Vaughn
College of Charleston, vaughnd@cofc.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.2752

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.
Aside from these concerns, *Encyclopedia of Hurricanes, Typhoons and Cyclones* is a fact-filled work with articles that are informative and accessible to both student and lay reader. And at this price, it is a reasonable and worthwhile investment for both academic and public libraries where there is interest. In fact, larger libraries may want this title for their circulating collections as well.

---

**International Security and the United States: An Encyclopedia** (2008, 978-0786431922, $200) offers national surveys with a twist. Published by Praeger Security International, this two-volume set gives the reader historic background and discussions of society and politics of the countries that it covers. But it offers this information from a singular perspective. The emphasis here is on the ‘human security’ within each country and how that country relates to the United States. And human security is defined broadly. The authors not only focus on internal violence in their discussions, issues like health care, necessary infrastructure, legal rights and the environment are all touched on.

A total of 48 countries are included and consist of nations that are most active on the world’s stage in their relationships with the US. From Afghanistan to Venezuela there are essays on individual countries that, in addition to sections on history, society and politics, also discuss law and order, foreign affairs, security, and justice and human rights. The length of each essay varies but they generally range from 15-25 pages and each has a substantial bibliography. Given the survey nature of the essays, these bibliographies are particularly helpful for those wanting to do more in-depth research.

Although dealing with controversial issues, the essays are factual and attempt to be objective in their analysis. Indicative of the scholarly seriousness of the essays, the affiliations and credentials of each contributor are provided.

With its emphasis on security and foreign relations, *International Security and the United States: an Encyclopedia* provides a unique approach to the countries it discusses. Not intended for lay readers, the primary audience for this work is students, academics and professionals in the fields of international security and foreign relations. For interested libraries, this is another title that could be equally at home in reference or circulation.

Public librarians and their patrons will be more excited about *Greenwood Press’ Crimes & Trials of the Century* (2007, 9780313341090). This two-volume set highlights many of the crimes and trials that are part of the “cultural memory” of the 20th century. From the *Black Sox* scandal of the 1919 World Series to the Unabomber, and from the kidnapping and murder of the Lindbergh baby to Martha Stewart, a total of 35 cases are discussed.

As you would expect of a reference work, the facts of each case are presented clearly and thoroughly. But each essay also discusses elements like the media’s role, public perceptions, contemporary impacts and the case’s aftermath and legacy. Visually enhanced by black and white photos and sidebars containing timelines, brief biographies and definitions, these two volumes are as enjoyable to browse as they are informative to read. Besides being compelling as individual articles, each one has suggestions for further reading, as well as a list of references useful for continued research.

*Crimes & Trials of the Century* is factual, fun and thought-provoking. It indulges our fascination with such events while raising often uncomfortable issues about American popular culture that are part of our history and that remain with us today. While suitable for some reference collections, many libraries will want this set available for circulation. Given the length of the articles and the popularity of the topic, a number of readers will want to check this title out to explore at leisure.


---

**My Bachelor of Arts is in history, and any historical title that passes my desk is of immediate interest to me. Two such titles are Ernie Gross and Roland H. Worth’s third edition of *This Day in American History* and Robert C. Williams’ second edition of *The Historian’s Toolbox*. As you would expect of a reference work, the facts of each case are presented clearly and thoroughly. But each essay also discusses elements like the media’s role, public perceptions, contemporary impacts and the case’s aftermath and legacy. Visually enhanced by black and white photos and sidebars containing timelines, brief biographies and definitions, these two volumes are as enjoyable to browse as they are informative to read. Besides being compelling as individual articles, each one has suggestions for further reading, as well as a list of references useful for continued research.**

*This Day in American History* is like the historical version of ALA’s Anniversaries and Holidays — it is laid out by month and day, and events are then listed chronologically. This latest edition adds coverage from 2000-2006. Births and deaths of notable American figures, well- and little-known events, beginnings of major social movements, court and legislative decisions, discoveries, disasters, “famous firsts,” and other facts fill the 200+ pages. As *Worth* points out in the preface, these events register as significant in American history. Praise them; condemn them. Either way these events are, and the knowledge of them provides not only the bare facts of our ever-changing society but also the flavor of sentiments and attitudes at any given moment in our history (1).

*Gross* and *Worth* are not strangers to publishing about the historical landscape. Between them, they have 13 other books from McFarland and numbers of titles from other publishers. Before his death, *Gross* had careers in newspaper journalism and govern-

---

By the prolific and meritorious enough to deserve a second or third edition of *This Day in American History* and Williams’ second edition of *The Historian’s Toolbox* provide a solid springboard for research and scholarship.

In his epic *The Wasteland*, Eliot called April the “cruelest month... stirring / Dull roots with spring rain.” I, however, find the provocation of the senses brought on by spring to be the perfect time to revive my love of learning by pouring over books and the interconnected knowledge — the history — within them. Happy reading, everyone! — DV

---

**Debbie Vaughn**

*Reviewed by Debbie Vaughn (College of Charleston)*
My Love of Books: Source of Life Support

by Nedelina Tchankalova (Librarian, Engineering & Physical Sciences Library, University of MD Libraries, College Park, MD 20742; Phone: 301-405-9151; Fax: 301-405-9164) <nedelina@umd.edu> Yahoo, AIM, MSN, Google Talk: NTLibrarian http://www.lib.umd.edu/ENGIN/profile_Tchankalova.html

Wisdom is wealth, and every good book is equivalent to a wise head – the head may die, but the book may live forever.

— Joseph Wheeler

My love of books sprang out of a lack of hearing. I was born with normal hearing but lost it partially due to a doctor’s mistake. I grew up in Bulgaria facing many challenges and switching back and forth between the world of silence and the world of sound. This event has marked my entire life and shaped my love of books.

“My can not be heard, can be read.” I started devouring books. For me, the library wasn’t a storage building filled with books — it was a bright stream of thought and spiritual nourishment. After completing my M.S. degree in Chemical Engineering in 1995, I took a position at the National Polytechnic Museum in Sofia. Rather than building machines as I was trained, I succumbed to my constant thirst for knowledge, followed my heart, and worked as a curator. One day, my boss asked me to come up with fresh ideas for new exhibits. The first place I instinctively sought for inspiration was … the library. You got it right! The museum had a small collection of books stuck in boxes, covered with dust. It was winter and due to poor funding, the storage room had broken windows and no heat. There was only one dilapidated mechanical typewriter in the entire museum. In the midst of these unappealing conditions I started opening the boxes and melted at the sight of the dusty books from unknown authors. G. Kellor’s words captured this moment in my life when he said, “Unread authors are kept in the underground crypts of libraries waiting to be rediscovered.”

Sitting on the floor, immersed in solitude, I began my exploration to find the hidden treasures of the books. It was as though they brought me back in a time machine through the history of science as I rediscovered the history of technology and its inventions. I traveled in awe of the human mind: its excellence and its limits, and melted at the sight of the dusty books from unknown authors. Their words, their lives, their experiences touched me and shaped my life. I felt the inspiration penetrate my mind and decided to pursue my passion for libraries.

I started my career as a display of opinion, minority groups, sociology, sexuality, and a snippet of the history of pro-gay rights. This event has marked my entire life and shaped my love of books.

“Against the Grain” was … the library. You got it right! The museum had a small collection of books stuck in boxes, covered with dust. It was winter and due to poor funding, the storage room had broken windows and no heat. There was only one dilapidated mechanical typewriter in the entire museum. In the midst of these unappealing conditions I started opening the boxes and melted at the sight of the dusty books from unknown authors. G. Kellor’s words captured this moment in my life when he said, “Unread authors are kept in the underground crypts of libraries waiting to be rediscovered.”

Sitting on the floor, immersed in solitude, I began my exploration to find the hidden treasures of the books. It was as though they brought me back in a time machine through the history of science as I rediscovered the history of technology and its inventions. I traveled in awe of the human mind: its excellence and its limits, and melted at the sight of the dusty books from unknown authors. Their words, their lives, their experiences touched me and shaped my life. I felt the inspiration penetrate my mind and decided to pursue my passion for libraries.

At least 200,000 pro-gay rights demonstrators held a rally on National Mall, Washington, DC; some estimates went far higher; their first massive Washington rally since 1993.” There is now no judgment of this controversial event, only that it reflects sentiments and attitudes deemed important by our “ever-changing society” (to use Worth’s own words).

The straightforward presentation of This Day in American History and The Historian’s Toolbox makes them excellent resources for any historian — whether in high school, college, or graduate school; whether professional or amateur; and whether serious or just curious. The fact is, we’re all historians whether we realize it or not; or so claims Williams. History is “not some arcane academic enterprise, but a deep structure that underlies our own lives” (Toolbox, 151). We each have our own historical memory, we keep records and evidence, we research, we argue, we tell stories, and we experience events. What these books have in common in the accessibility they both lend to history; history doesn’t have to be wordy or long-winded, and the events and consequences that shape history have different meanings to different people.

Both of these updated editions should be in your high school, academic, and public libraries.

continued on page 53

<http://www.against-the-grain.com>