From the Reference Desk

Tom Gilson
College of Charleston, gilsont@cofc.edu

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Welcome to the annual "Hurricane Issue" of Against the Grain. After the threat of another "Storm of the century" and its accompanying 16-hour evacuation nightmare, I am happy to report, Charleston is still on the map. And, on a more personal level, my office is still where I left it, and looks much the same. In other words, there are new reference books scattered all over the place crying to be reviewed. So here we go!

Within the past year, Kluwer Academic has released two new entries in their authoritative Encyclopedia of Earth Sciences Series. Both the Encyclopedia of Environmental Science (1999, 0-412-74050-8; $480) and the Encyclopedia of Geochemistry (1999, 0-412-75550-9; $480) are worthy, if expensive, additions to this quality series. Edited by David E. Alexander and Rhodes W. Fairbridge, the Encyclopedia of Environmental Science contains over 370 entries written by an international cast of 228 contributors. As befitting the topic, coverage is diverse but interrelated. Articles dealing with natural environments like beaches, wetlands, deserts, and mountain areas are side by side with those dealing with processes like deforestation, photosynthesis, the greenhouse effect and the nitrogen cycle. Entries also cover natural hazards like earthquakes, floods, landslides and volcanoes as well as mediating efforts like dams and reservoirs, earthquake prediction, river regulation and land drainage. Broader, more inclusive topics like energy, pollution, ecology, and the conservation of natural resources are also treated and, in fact, afforded the longest essays in the Encyclopedia. Obviously, this reference contains plenty of hard science, but it is also informed by an awareness of the human impact on the environment and the "need to restore balance and harmony." For example, there are a number of entries drawing on the social sciences like those on environmental ethics and aesthetics, ecotourism, zoning regulations, federal agencies and control, environmental policy and sustainable development. In addition, there are articles on select scientists and environmentalists. Those chosen for inclusion are a diverse lot and include Aristotle, Francis of Assisi, Rachel Carson, Charles Darwin, Aldo Leopold, and Sir Peter Marham Scott among others. Environmental science is such a multidisciplinary, broad-ranging subject that it is difficult to provide the coverage it deserves in one volume. However, in this case, the Encyclopedia of Environmental Science succeeds in being a comprehensive, scientific treatise that will be of considerable use to interested professionals and scientists, as well as scholars and students. Even libraries that have other one-volume works like Houghton Mifflin's Encyclopedia of the Environment (1994, 0395550416; $49.95), Gale's Environmental Encyclopedia (1998, 81039314X; $208) and McGraw Hill's Encyclopedia of Environmental Science (1993, 0070513961; $105) will want to consider this work.

The Encyclopedia of Geochemistry offers a similar comprehensive, science based approach but, in this case, to the evolving field of geochemistry. Some 200 contributors have written 345 articles that cover topics related to the use of chemistry to both "explore and understand the Earth from the most basic elementary levels," and "to comprehend the evolution of the planet and life on it." In the popular mind, geochemistry is most often associated with its role in dating events in the Earth's history and articles on dating methods, geochronology and radiotopes, the geologic time scale, geochronology and radioactivity offer ample coverage of this area. In addition, there is great emphasis on individual elements and their geochemical groupings, the chemistry of the Earth's atmosphere, crust and oceans, various aspects of geochemical thermodynamics, and the organic geochemistry related to oil shale, coal, petroleum and natural gas. Because of the nature of its content, this encyclopedia seems even more laden with hard science than the Encyclopedia of Environmental Science. Special libraries and academic libraries with strong science collections will want to take a close look at this volume.

Both these encyclopedias are replete with helpful tables and charts, good bibliographies, and the strong use of cross-referencing. Each book has an author cited and subject index, but the Encyclopedia of Geochemistry has additional appendices listing chemical elements, the international system of units and a list of entries by subject. This last feature is one that any future volumes of the Encyclopedia of Environmental Science should consider adding.

The overall Encyclopedia of Earth Sciences Series is a substantial undertaking that Kluwer seems committed to. According to their Web page "previous volumes are being updated and new works published so that the volumes will continue to be essential reading for all professional earth scientists." Let's hope they hold to it. One also hopes that Kluwer will consider some form of updating via Web page access for this series. Scientific information is particularly vulnerable to dating and in a quick look at the bibliographies in both these volumes, I saw few references later than 1994. (And given the cost of these books, access to Web updates should come as part of the purchase price.)

On a much less technical and professional level is Gale's World of Biology edited by Kimberly A. McGrath (1999, 0787630446; $85). Advertised as a reference providing "detailed information in Layperson's language," this book is appropriate for high school students and lower level undergraduates, as well as the general reader. In over 1000 articles this one-volume reference covers an impressive list of topics ranging from bacteria to the brain, genetic code to grasslands and steroids to seismotations. There are also essays on important scientists and other individuals continued on page 33

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who have made major impacts on the field. *The World of Biology* is illustrated with approximately 350 images that serve to complement the text. Added features include a list of sources consulted, a historical chronology and a useful general index. Obviously not intended as an exhaustive study, this book offers well-written, understandable essays on major concepts and issues related to biology and its allied disciplines. The essays range from 200 to 1000 words in length and will be of particular use to those needing definitions and background information. Gale plans the *World of Biology* as the first of a series that will include volumes on chemistry, mathematics, physics and health. High school and public libraries will benefit most from the addition of this book.

Film librarians will welcome *Routledge's Encyclopedia of Chinese Film* (1998, 0415151686; $140). There is little else in the reference literature that covers Chinese film as comprehensively, especially in a single volume. The *Encyclopedia of Chinese Film* is actually an encyclopedia of "three Chinas," the People's Republic, Taiwan and Hong Kong. This becomes immediately apparent in the introductory essays that cover the film history of each. Following these essays are the main entries of the encyclopedia listed alphabetically. For the most part, the articles are brief and clearly written, providing essential information. There are specific entries on themes and issues like censorship, the representation of women, nationalism, urban life and sexuality, as well as genres like musicals, children's film, documentary, melodrama and the action film. There are also articles on topics like criticism, film education and propaganda. However, the majority of entries deal with either film personalities like actors, actresses and directors or they provide synopses of individual films. Nonetheless, the reader is left with an impression of an encyclopedia with a well-balanced mix of articles. The book also includes a number of useful features like name, title and studio indexes, a classified contents list, a selective bibliography, and for the specialist, a glossary of Chinese characters with corresponding Pinyin and English versions of film titles and names. The volume is illustrated with 50 B&W photos. Editors Yingjin Zhang and Zhiwei Xiao deserve credit for a useful, thorough treatment of an important and interesting topic. Academic libraries and large public libraries will find this a valuable addition to their film reference collections.

Another useful film reference, is McFarland's *Serials and Series: A World Filmography 1912-1956* by Buck Rainey (1999, 0786404493; $95). Many people are familiar with the film serials of the 1930's and 1940's. Television and showings in art movie houses have popularized serials like *Flash Gordon, Flying G-Men, and the Lone Ranger.* But this film genre has a long and more varied history. In his introduction, author Buck Rainey points out that serials and series have a history stretching back to the silent era with classics like *The Perils of Pauline,* the *Adventures of Kathlyn,* and the very first serial, *What Happened to Mary* released in 1912. These initial serials usually offered a cliffhanger plot with a female protagonist, but soon they expanded to include westerns, science fiction and romance. Rainey also notes that serials and series were more than just American. French, Italian, German, Spanish and English filmmakers contributed to the genre. In this book, he covers 471 American serials and 100 American series, as well as 136 foreign serials and 37 foreign series. Arranged alphabetically by title, each entry is numbered and gives the overall title, individual chapter titles, the release date, the actors and

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other principals, as well as, a brief syn-
opses. There is also a general index and a
selective bibliography.

Serials and Series: A World
Filmmaking 1912-1956 is both informa-
tive and fun to browse, being illustrated
with black & white photos on nearly ev-
ery page. This reference will appeal to
casual readers as well as film buffs and
film historians. Public libraries will
definitely be interested, as will aca-
demic libraries.

Garland has added another impressive
title to their Military History of the
United States series. In World War II in
Europe: An Encyclopedia, (1999,
0824070291; $175) editor David T.
Zabecki gives readers a thorough and ac-
curate look at the European theatre of this
century’s most devastating war. It is a
welcomed scholarly treatment coming on
the heels of a renewed interest in the Sec-
ond World War, as evidenced in recent
bestsellers by authors as diverse as
Stephen Ambrose and Tom Brokaw.
The encyclopedia’s organization gives an
indication of its scope. The two volumes
of World War II in Europe are divided
into six broad sections including social
and political issues; leaders and individu-
als, units and organizations; weapons and
equipment; strategy and tactics; and
battles, campaigns and operations. The
articles within each section are arranged
alphabetically and are informative and
well-researched. However, with six differ-
ent sections, readers will want to spend
some time examining this reference to get
“lay of the land.” In a sense the sections
operate as a broad thematic index and, in
fact, the final section on battles, campaigns
and operations, has its own geo-
graphical and chronological index. But, essenti-
ial to accessing the wealth of infor-
mation in this set, is the use of
both the general index and the index of military
units and warships provided in the back
of volume 2. While use of these indexes is
generally satisfactory, there are a few
problems. Looking for information on
Romania’s role in the war, I was per-
plexed to find no reference in the gen-
eral index. Luckily, I checked in the
index to military units and found a listing
under Armies - Romania which led me to
what I wanted to know. Also looking for
information on European Jewry, I was
somewhat surprised to find nothing listed
in the general index under Jews, but even
more surprised that there was no cross
reference from Jews to Holocaust, which
is where the information can be found.
In such instances the use of “see refer-
ces” within the general index would
help, especially given the complexity of
this encyclopedia’s content.

That being said, there are many fea-
tures that enhance the value of World War
II in Europe. Duplicate map sets of the
strategic military operations are pub-
lished in both volumes while the appen-
dices include a chronology, tables of com-
parative military ranks, a glossary, Allied
and Axis code names and a selected bib-
liography. Because of its more complex
arrangement, gaining familiarity with this
reference will require time and patience,
but given the coverage, it is worth the
effort. Students, scholars and lay readers
interested in the Second World War
in Europe will find this encyclopedia pro-
viding a rich lode of valuable informa-
tion. One hopes that Garland plans a
companion set (with an improved gen-
eral index), possibly titled World War
II in the Pacific.

ARC-CIO has also published a two-
volume set directed at those with interest
in military history. Geared more to
a popular audience, American Military
Leaders: From Colonial Times to the
Present (1999, 1576070018; $150) con-
tains 422 biographical sketches of mili-
tary leaders throughout American history.
Great generals like Lee and Patton stand
beside incompetents like Benjamin Lin-
coln and fools like
George Custer. In-
dian war chiefs like
Red Cloud and
Cochise are included
along with frontier
fighters like Davy
Crockett and Sam
Dale. And modern
leaders like Colin
Powell and William
Westmoreland are af-
forded the same coverage as Revolu-
tionary War patriots like Francis Marion
and Nathaniel Greene. Interestingly, author
John Fredriksen, extends the idea of mili-
tary leadership to primarily non-combat
roles. Explorers like William Clark and
Robert Byrd, as well as women like Sec-
ond World War aviator Jackie Cochran
and Civil War nurse Dorothea Dix also make
his list. The entries are arranged alphabeti-
cally and each has a brief but useful bib-
liography. The writing is direct and to the
point, without being dry. Beside the
alphabetical arrangement, a list of en-
tries by military title, as well as a gen-
eral index, help provide additional ac-
cess.

Information on most of these people
who can be found in other sources but American
Military Leaders offers a convenient
and accessible reference focused on
American military biography. High
school and public libraries with inter-
ested readership will also find it de-
serving of attention.

The second edition of Bernan’s Hand-
book of North American Industry (1999,
0-890591571; $89) was published earlier
this year and builds on the reputation of
the first edition. Expanding on a win-
ning formula, the second edition adds
three new industry chapters in the Trade
and Services section, the Overview; Edu-
cation and Social Services; and Gover-
ment. However, the main value of this
reference is still in the focus on statistics
related to NAFTA (North American
Free Trade Agreement) and its member
nations. Government figures from the
United States, Canada and Mexico are
employed in visually attractive tables
and charts that help the researcher analyze
the economic impact of the treaty. Over
thirty industries are covered including
agriculture, mining, construction as well
as those in the manufacturing sector like
apparel, electronic equipment, furniture,
industrial machinery, lumber, paper, pe-
tro eum, rubber and textiles. The service
sector is represented with coverage of
business and professional services, health
services, transportation, finance, wholes-
sale and retail trade, education and so-
cial services and government services.

As with many of Bernan’s publications
much of the value is in the accumulation
of existing statistics into a related and vi-
ually appealing package. But the Handbook
of North American Industry adds a gen-
erous amount of explanatory text throughout that enlivens the statistics. All in
all, the Handbook of North American
Industry gives good value for the price.
My only criticism is that there is far more
information related to the United States
than the other two countries. Of course,
this is not surprising given the dominance
of the American economy, but one hopes
that future editions will beef up the
coverage of Canada and Mexico. Regard-
less, both public and academic libraries
will want to add it to their business re-
ference collections, especially those that
missed the first edition.