2003

From the Reference Desk

Thomas Gilson

College of Charleston, gilsont@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.4487

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.
Interview — Ron Boehm
from page 72

ATG: What do you think is the future for eBooks in reference publishing, or for publishing in general?

RB: Web-based eBooks really make sense for reference titles. The anytime, anywhere, unlimited access model works well for books that are generally used for less than half an hour. Librarians can concentrate on putting their patrons with the right materials rather than dealing with handling the physical books. Ready Reserve is no longer necessary. Distance learners are automatically served if they have access to their institution’s library system.

At some point, I think that libraries will get beyond the “great deal” in buying eBooks. Buying older, low usage, lower value books sold in large collections doesn’t seem to make sense when building a print collection; why would this be a good collection development strategy for eBooks? I’m not surprised that libraries are not satisfied with the usage of their eBook collections. Shouldn’t their expectations for such eBook collections be about the same as for print versions of these older, low circulation titles? Just because a title is available as an eBook doesn’t mean that demand for the content goes up.

I also think that the shared book model will fade away. We have chosen not to participate in programs that offer older titles to a large number of institutions on one book, one user basis. Most publishers will not offer their frontlist titles in this way. Reference publishers and libraries have a symbiotic relationship. Publishers have to sell enough books to libraries to have a viable and sustainable business, and libraries depend on the publishers for the titles. Selling one copy to a large number of institutions means that a publisher is likely to sell many fewer total titles overall. This threatens the viability of the fundamental business model.

ATG: From what you’re saying, eBooks have a real future in reference publishing. What about print titles? Are they slowly, but surely, being placed on the endangered species list? Or will print and eBooks reach a mutually beneficial accommodation?

RB: If we look again at what happened with our abstracting services, we had a rapid migration once they were available through the Web. Yet there are a number of publishers who keep both the print and e-versions. The library has bought the intellectual property with the first version, and is just trying to enhance their patrons’ convenience. We’ve tried to make this easier by providing a steep discount for the print version. This is mirrored in our eBook/print bundle pricing. So I don’t think print reference books will go away, but the use of the print medium may evolve much as radio evolved when TV was invented.

ATG: On your Website, you note “ABC-CLIO takes pride in constantly re-inventing itself.” What will be the next incarnation? What “new technologies, new paradigms, and new business models” does ABC-CLIO plan to use in keeping your edge in the marketplace?

RB: I’d say that there are two key points about our future. First, we’ll continue to design from the intended use up, not the information down. Second, we will expand our offerings in history.

Designing from the intended use up is just saying we are customer focused. We don’t intend this in a cliché way. We start our product planning for books and databases by anticipating what projects the users do regularly. We ask what content our publications should contribute to these projects, the amount of time users have to find what they need, and the level of detail that users might want. Our content, the selection and search capabilities, and, in electronic products, our information management tools, are designed to assist.

Second, our history-oriented products and services are likely to expand into more different genres. We are not unfamiliar with software, video, and textbook development, as we have offered many different publication types in our fifty years of existence.

Together, our design orientation and the expansion and integration of our offerings will be of great benefit to the history practitioners we serve — scholars, teachers, and students — and to the librarians who work with them.

ATG: Ron, thank you, it’s been a pleasure talking to you, and learning more about ABC-CLIO.

RB: It’s been great. I enjoyed it. 😊

From the Reference Desk
by Tom Gilson (Head, Reference Services, Robert Scott Small Library, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC 29424; Phone: 843-953-8014; Fax: 843-953-8019) <gilsont@cocf.edu>

The two-volume Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance edited by Dennis Kennedy (2003, 0-19-860174-3, $275) has many of the features that one looks for in a good reference. It takes high quality content, then combines the content with solid indexing and other helpful features, and then presents it in an attractive, easy-to-use format.

First let’s talk about the basics. Editor Dennis Kennedy has amassed 4,300 entries written by approximately 300 international contributors, and complemented them with over 100 black and white illustrations. The coverage is international and considers more than American and European theater. Asian, Caribbean, Latin American, Middle Eastern and African theater are also represented. A great deal of space is devoted to brief biographies of major playwrights, directors and actors, as well as stage and lighting designers and theater managers and critics. Individual articles discuss topics ranging from the ritual origins of theater, to the medieval morality play, to the studio theater movement, and from classical Greek tragedy, to British pantomime, to street theater in India. There are also numerous articles on broader themes like critical concepts and methods, social theories and issues, character and performance types, as well as those that speak to the architecture of playhouses and discuss theater companies and festivals, and theatrical organizations and institutions. Special features include an excellent thematic table of contents, a sixty page selective index of dramatic titles, listing the articles in which they appear, a timeline matching theater and performance events with historical and cultural ones. Other features include a complete list of contributors with their credentials, and a bibliography of further readings.

As Mr. Kennedy notes in his Preface, the Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance is grounded in contemporary theater and performance studies, so it is no surprise that the treatment is scholarly. However, it is accessible to the general reader, as well as the serious student. This reference is appropriate for both public and academic libraries and should take its place among other titles like Routledge’s World Encyclopedia of World Theatre (1994, 0415232058, $900), and the Cambridge Guide to Theatre (1995, 052143378, $50). (This later volume would be a good choice for libraries strapped for funds, or branch libraries with smaller collections.)

Wiley-Interscience has released another high-end science reference. The new two-volume Encyclopedia of Space Science and Technology (2003, 0-471-32408-6, $550) edited by continued on page 76

<http://www.against-the-grain.com>
Newly published by Marcel Dekker, the Encyclopedia of Public Administration and Public Policy (2003, 0824742400, 495) covers the discipline from both theoretical and practical vantage points. Edited by respected scholar, Jack Rabin, this two-volume set provides a rich mix of articles that offer thorough coverage of the concepts governing public administration and policy studies, as well as the issues confronting these disciplines. A brief look at the table of contents supports this contention. There are entries on broad concepts like civic duty, bureaucratic politics and public service, as well as controversial issues like annexation, home rule and privatization. Practical concerns like auditing, procurement, and inventory management are covered, as are theories of public administration like public choice and administrative science. Human resources issues are discussed in articles like team building, motivation and job classification while key topics like decision making, ethics and budgeting are covered in a variety of relevant articles. Professor Rabin has assembled some 360 scholars and practitioners to produce the 300 articles contained in the Encyclopedia.

The emphasis is on American public administration and policy, so this new set does not replace Jay M. Shafritz's International Encyclopedia of Public Policy and Administration, still the seminal work in the field. However, this encyclopedia serves to duplicate Shafritz to some extent, and provides a definite focus on public administration as practiced in the United States. Overall, the Encyclopedia of Public Administration and Public Policy is a serious candidate for purchase by libraries supporting public administration and public policy courses.

(And as an added incentive for library consider purchase, Marcel Dekker is offering a free online subscription for one year with purchase of the print edition. If interested, please contact sales@dekker.com or call 1-800-228-160 (USA, Canada & South America) or 0041-61-260-6161 (Far East, Middle East & Africa) for ordering information.)

Ancestry in America (2003, 1-59327-029-2, S225) is a unique statistical compilation. Published by Grey House, it is exactly what the subtitle says, "a comparative city-by-city guide to over 200 ethnic origins and racial backgrounds—with rankings." Based on the 2000 census, it is divided into two major sections. The first part of Ancestry in America is arranged by state and lists 4,206 places with populations over 10,000. Each entry includes basics like the official name of the place, its type, (i.e. city, town, village, census designated place), county location and total population. However, the real value is in the ethnic breakdowns. Ancestry and ethnic group are listed from Afghan to Yugoslavian, with in-depth breakdowns for various Arab, Asian, Hispanic and African ethnic groups, as well as for American Indian tribes, Hawaiian Pacific Islanders and Alaska Indian tribes. African Americans and whites are broken down by the broad categories, Hispanic and Not Hispanic. The data itself is given in both raw numbers and percentages. For example, in looking for the number of Irish living in Torrington, Connecticut you find that 5,644 people of Irish descent live there, and that they make up 16.03% of the population.

The second part of the book is a ranking of the tables for each ethnic group. The first two are based on all 33,150 places in the U.S., while the third pertains to places with more than 10,000 population. The first table lists the top 50 places for each ethnic group, sorted by number of population. From this first table, we learn that New York City leads in number of Irish with 420,810, although they make up only 5.25% of the overall population. The second table is based on percentage of the population and lists the place with the largest concentration of Irish in the country—Champa, Missouri where 100% of the population is Irish. (All twenty-one of them.) The third table ranks places with more than 10,000 population according to percentage, and lists Pearl River, NY on top with 7,256 Irish descendents, or 46.60% of the total population of 15,553.

And that’s not all. While this book is

<http://www.against-the-grain.com>
From the Reference Desk
from page 76

crammed with numbers, for those who cannot get enough, a companion CD offers “the same information, presented in the same way,” but for all 33,150 places, regardless of total population.

Many libraries will find this resource useful for answering the occasional reference question on ethnic backgrounds in specific places. However, Ancestry in America should also prove a statistical bonanza for those doing in-depth research on ethnic populations in the U.S.

As the title implies, Pilgrimage: From the Ganges to Graceland (2002, 1576070042, $185) includes more than the religious side of this centuries-old pursuit. Published by ABC-CLIO and written by two professors at the University of Rhode Island, Linda Kay Davidson and David M. Gitlitz, this is a serious encyclopedia that sheds light on pilgrimage, both religious and secular. A great deal of space is devoted to individual pilgrimage sites. Admittedly, the vast majority of sites covered are religious in nature. However, many others are not, ranging from the Alamo to Lenin’s tomb, from the battlefield at Gallipoli to Wounded Knee, and from the Holocaust sites at places like Treblinka and Bergen-Belsen to Jim Morrison’s grave at the Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris. Beside specific sites, the Encyclopedia also includes entries on related topics like relics, apparitions, blessings, hospitality and guidebooks and manuals, as well as the part pilgrimage plays in religions like Islam, Roman Catholicism and Shinto. The content of this reference is rich and varied, and so are the value-added features. They include an informative introduction, a full, alphabetical list of articles, “see” and “see also” references and bibliographies after each article, as well as a collected list of the works cited. There are also two very helpful appendices; one that lists pilgrimage sites by country, and the other listing them by religion or type. Naturally, there is a general index that links specific areas of interest to their relevant pages.

Pilgrimage: From the Ganges to Graceland is a unique source that helps explain the attraction and importance that pilgrimage has for millions of people, regardless of nationality, or religion. This two-volume work also testifies to the fact that pilgrimage is a phenomenon being studied by serious theologians and social scientists, and offers its own valuable, historical and contemporary insights. Interested readers, as well as students and scholars, will find this reference both valuable and fascinating. Depending on needs and budget, both public and academic libraries will find it appropriate for their reference collections.

The Acquisitions Institute at Timberline Lodge
Saturday, May 15 through Tuesday, May 18, 2004
Timberline Lodge is located one hour east of Portland, OR on the slope of Mt. Hood

Call for Papers

WHAT IS The Acquisitions Institute?
- The pre-eminent Western North America conference on acquisitions and collection development, now in its fifth year at Timberline Lodge.
- A small, informal and stimulating gathering in a convivial and glorious Northwestern setting.
- A three day conference focusing on the methods and madness of building and managing library collections.
- See The Acquisitions Institute at Timberline Lodge for more information @ http://libweb.oregonstate.edu/events/atl/

WHAT TOPICS are we looking for?
The planning committee is open to presentations on all aspects of library acquisitions and collection management. Presenters are encouraged to engage the audience in discussion. Panel discussions are well received. The planning committee may wish to bring individual proposals together to form panels. The committee is especially looking for submissions on the following topics:
- Operations management of acquisitions or collection development
- Organization for collection development
- Role of consortia in collection development
- Financial management, accounting practices, and audits
- Integrated library systems as management information system
- Personnel issues and strategies for change
- Staff training
- Recruiting and retaining technical services and collection development librarians
- Changing roles of book vendors and subscription agents
- Vendor selection and assessment
- Economics of scholarly publishing
- Publishing, pricing and distributing electronic journals
- Electronic books: content, access, cataloging
- External forces driving a library’s collection management decisions
- Problems of (and solutions for) managing electronic resources

WHAT IS THE DEADLINE for submitting a proposal?
- December 1, 2003

HOW do I submit a proposal?
- Send an abstract of 200 words or less to:
  Richard Brumley
  Head, Collection Development Department
  Oregon State University Libraries
  Corvallis, OR 97331-4501
  Email: Richard.Brumley@orst.edu
  Phone: (541) 737-2118
  Fax: (541) 737-8267

The Acquisitions Institute at Timberline Lodge planning committee consists of Richard Brumley, Oregon State University; Nancy Slight-Gibney, University of Oregon; and Scott Smith, Blackwell’s Book Services.

Routledge has also published an encyclopedia that occupies a unique niche. South Asian Folklore: An Encyclopedia (2003, 081531499X, $175) is a single volume work that concentrates on the folklore and culture of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. In total, there are 500 articles written by 250 contributors with the content intended for an academic audience. Many, if not most, articles are “item-centered in that they describe particular expressive forms, classes of objects and events or occasions.” Therefore, readers will find articles on painting, film, music and shadow puppetry, as well as those on masks, mannequins and jewelry. There is also coverage of specific ceremonies like the Bhuta Kola and festivals like the Ratha Jatra. In addition, there are general concept articles focusing on topics as diverse as gender and folklore, colonialism, gods and goddesses, food and food ways, legend, puberty rites and worship. And, of course, there are essays that cover topics relating to specific countries like shamanism in Nepal, sacred geography in Afghanistan, pottery in Sri Lanka, food ways in Pakistan, architecture in Bangladesh and crafts and development in India.

South Asian Folklore is another reference book that could benefit from a thematic table of contents, or thematic index. The topic groupings that such a table of contents offers would give a better sense of both the scope of the encyclopaedia, as well as the relationship among articles. Most readers, especially those unfamiliar with South Asian folklore would find such a tool a useful aid. Fortunately, the editors have included an alphabetical list of articles, “see also” references when necessary, and a general index that is fairly exhaustive, listing numerous subcategories for the major headwords.

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

While South Asian Folklore is an impressive effort, there is no way a single volume could be comprehensive. The editors are correct in saying that this book "presents a suggestive sample of the huge range of South Asian cultural practices and productions." However, South Asian Folklore offers a very useful starting point, and is one of those encyclopedias that help define an area of study by initiating the collection of related and relevant information. Hopefully, there will be a second edition in a few years that will trace the continued growth of this field. Academic libraries supporting South Asian studies should put it on their list of future purchases.

Greenwood has added another title to its reference catalog that should attract some attention. The Greenwood Guide to American Popular Culture (2002, 0313308780, $400) is a four-volume set that plays to our fascination with what Gilbert Seldes called the "lively arts." This set is an update of an earlier Greenwood title, the Handbook of American Popular Culture (1989, out of print but available used, via Amazon.) A few entries from the 1989 edition have been dropped because they have received substantial coverage elsewhere, but a few new topics are included like, "amusement parks, home improvements, housing, living history, enchantments, museums and collecting, and the New Age movements." Overall, this new version consists of close to sixty chapters covering cornerscenes of America popular culture ranging from automobiles and animation to Westerns and young adult fiction. Each entry offers historical outlines of the topic, as well as a series of bibliographic essays discussing reference works, research collections and history and criticism. In addition, each chapter ends with a listing of full citations for the books and articles referred to in the bibliographic essays. Editors M. Thomas Inge and Dennis Hall also include two helpful introductory chapters. The first attempts a definition of popular culture and is reprinted from the 1989 edition. The second chapter discusses the study of popular culture as an evolving discipline.

Greenwood Guide to American Popular Culture does not replace the five-volume St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture (2000, 1558624015, $820.50) and it 2,700 alphabetically arranged entries, but it serves as a highly useful companion. It is intended for the student and the serious researcher in need of guidance to quality sources for numerous topics related to popular culture. Reference librarians in academic as well as larger public libraries will turn to this set when guiding patrons to further sources and basic background information.


Reviewed by Michael Litchfield
<dcblue_room@hotmail.com>

The Cuban Filmography, 1897 Through 2001, by Alfonso J. Garcia Osuna, is more than just a filmography. It includes a forty-page essay on the history of film in Cuba. Although continued on page 81