From the Reference Desk: Reference Reviews

Tom Gilson
College of Charleston, gilsont@cofc.edu
A number of useful and interesting reference books have crossed my desk during the past few weeks. Admittedly they are an eclectic mix, but they are titles worth knowing about.

By far the most visually interesting is Bob Cotton’s and Richard Oliver’s *Cyberspace Lexicon* published by Phaidon and distributed by Chronicle. (1994, ISBN 0-7148-3267-7, Pbk. $29.95). It resembles an overstuffed *Wired* magazine, full of color and slick graphics. Described as a “guide through the maze of new and emerging technologies,” which make up cyberspace, this book provides hundreds of definitions drawn from the merging worlds of telecommunications, computers, media and electronics. The definitions are clear and precise and offer cross references, as well as pointing to entries of related interest. In addition, short but more detailed articles supplement the definitions and highlight key concepts. But, the visuals are what make the *Cyberspace Lexicon* unique. Through an abundant use of bright colorful illustrations, imaginative computer graphics and crisp photographs, Cotton and Oliver have produced a book that is both fun to look at and useful.

Another heavily illustrated and useful book is Rolf Anderson’s *Atlas of the American Economy* published by Paragon House is a fascinating look at the darker side of Western religious history. (1994, ISBN 1-56802-001-5, $34.95; ISBN 1-56802-052-X, Pbk. $19.95). Anderson divides his book into four parts: the Big Picture, Big Trends, Basic Industries and Notes and Sources. The Big Picture looks at the economy in broad generalized aggregates according to production, employment, principal industries by state and the major changes in the economy. The Big Trends section marks changes in growth, demographics, technology, international trade/global economics, consumerism, competition and small business/big business. Anderson divides his Basic Industries section into 75 major industrial groups, providing charts and graphs covering employment, revenue and other trends. He also provides a Highlights section for each entry listing interesting facts which augment the charts and graphs. In Notes and Sources Anderson offers analysis of each entry from the first three parts of the book, as well as brief cites for his sources of information. The *Atlas of the American Economy* is a quick and handy source for a basic overview of the US economy.

