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From the Reference Desk

Thomas Gilson

College of Charleston, gilsont@cofc.edu

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an era where Web search engines are widely trusted as the path for information gathering (think of the OCLC Study on the Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources) how do we remain relevant to the Millennial generation? How do we visibly and persistently insert ourselves in the information flow of our users, if the “book” is our one and only brand?

There has been much talk (e.g., the ICOLC Statement on the Global Economic Crisis and its Impact on Consortial Licenses) on the need for more flexibility in vendor pricing models, the importance of tradeoffs between features and pricing, and better dialogue between vendors and libraries to find creative solutions for sustainability of licensing arrangements. This also feeds into the issue of what is good enough in our business relations, it being understood that we need to preserve the best of what we have attained in our partnerships and practices. What is good enough for libraries today could be quite different from what it has been in the heyday of healthy and expanding budgets.

What is good enough for an electronic resources management system? Many of us have struggled with commercial products that function below our requirements, while not

integrating with our existing workflows. As there is no ideal ERM that can address the myriad of issues that we would like to resolve, the question becomes, which system best meets our core requirements, and integrates with future workflow planning in technical services? And if we develop our own ERM — or discovery layer tools or content management systems, for that matter — what standards are good enough?

What is good enough for participation levels for institutional repositories? This question is fraught with political and logistical issues in the academy. At some point, though, we need to accept that full participation is unlikely, and that we need to focus our efforts strategically — this would first mean defining a realistic benchmark of success, and partnering with those who can help us achieve it. Similarly, we will never reach all students through information literacy programs, no matter how zealous and proactive we are. How, then, do we determine our yardstick of effectiveness? How do we determine the outcomes and decide what is good enough? The research literature makes it clear that reference service is never as effective as we would like it to be. What level of effectiveness can we live with, particularly as we try to balance our efforts and limited resources across many library services and initiatives?

While **Voltaire** didn't work in a 21st century library (and certainly wouldn't recognize it as a library!) he could teach us a thing or two about the problems of reaching beyond our circumstances. Yes, we do need to dream about how we could provide a range of outstanding services, programs, and collections, but in an era of fiscal restraint and fundamental reassessment in many libraries, this is an opportunity to make critical decisions about focusing energy on high value services that offer the greatest impact for the dollars available, in terms of how we conceive the library in three, five, and ten years time. What will be the library's role in ten years? Do we have a reasonably clear consensus in our libraries on this point? I think that much depends on our assumptions here. In what new ways will we be enabling learning and collaboration, for example? To what extent will new forms of scholarly communication be driving our collections budget?

Which brings me back to **Voltaire** — “The perfect is the enemy of the good.” Once we have distilled the nature of “good” in today's context we can focus on tangibly achieving it. Many of us have been down this difficult road of reassessment before, but the social and technological complexity in our landscape is on a scale far greater than anything we've seen before. It will require a quantum leap in vision, courage, and leadership. 🐘

From the Reference Desk

by **Tom Gilson** (Head, Reference Services, Addlestone Library, College of Charleston, 66 George Street, Charleston, SC 29401; Phone: 843-953-8014; Fax: 843-953-8019) <gilson@cofc.edu>

Some reference works appear to be too specialized for broad application. The *Encyclopedia of the First Amendment* (2009, 978-0-87289-311-5, \$285) with its narrow sounding title, seems like it might fall into that category. However, first amendment rights are so essential to the freedoms and liberties that we enjoy, nothing could be further from the truth. The freedom of religion, the press, and the right to assembly and petition the government are core elements in the political, cultural and historic development of the nation giving this work wide ranging relevance.

An initial examination of this two-volume set reveals the scope of the topics and issues covered. In more than 1,400 entries, issues ranging from affirmative action to intelligent design to zoning laws are covered. There are also entries

dealing with specific legal concepts like the separation of church and state, censorship, the equal time rule, gag orders, prior restraint and tolerance theory. Added to this, there are numerous articles that treat relevant court cases, documents, laws, and government entities as well as related organizations and influential people.

However, one might argue that equally germane are the seven essays that serve as an introduction and overview. These essays place the establishment and free exercise of religion clauses, as well as freedom of speech, freedom of the press and the right to petition and assembly in historic context. They also discuss how these rights have been incorporated into the due process clause of the fourteenth Amendment as well as worldwide attitudes about first amendment rights and its possible future impacts and interpretation.

The set also has a number of high quality value added features. Providing additional assistance to readers is a topical table of contents, a legal case table of contents, a chronology, a list of online resources, a select bibliography, and individual case and subject indexes.

The *Encyclopedia of the First Amendment* is an important and unique scholarly contribution. Editors **John R. Vile**, **David L. Hudson Jr.** and **David Schultz** have proven track records and their expertise is on full display

in this set. They have assembled a thoughtful and comprehensive treatment that students and scholars who are concerned with issues related to the first amendment, the Bill of Rights and the U.S. Constitution will find invaluable as a background resource. This set will find a welcome place next to core titles like **Macmillan Reference's** *Encyclopedia of the American Constitution* (2000, 0-02-864880-3, \$817).

The *Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales* (2008, 978-0-313-33441-2, \$299.95) is a three-volume set that deals with a growing area of scholarly interest. Folk and fairy tales are part of almost every culture and the *Encyclopedia* reflects this “global context.” And while editor **Donald Haase** admits that given space limitations, coverage is “representative and not comprehensive,” nonetheless, he and his contributors attempt to survey the discipline “from antiquity to the present” using a multidisciplinary approach that mirrors today's scholarship.

Regarding actual content, the 670 entries in these three volumes can be grouped into eight distinct categories. There are articles that cover specific genres like ballads and legends as well as those that deal with cultural, national, regional and linguistic groups ranging from

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Celtic to Pacific Island tales. There are also articles that define the critical terms, concepts and methods used by scholars in the field along with those that treat motifs, themes and character types. In addition, there are entries that discuss eras and movements, and various media and other cultural forms including television, film, animation and video. And of course there are entries for individual authors, scholars, collectors, artists, and translators as well as those for specific works as diverse as *Hansel and Gretel*, *Snow White*, the *Wizard of Oz* and the *Arabian Nights*.

The articles can range in length from one page biographical sketches to essays four to five pages long (at least one entry is ten pages.) "See also" references are provided in bold within the text of each article and each entry has a list of further readings as well as selected Web resources and other media. In addition, there is a substantial bibliography in volume three including a list of folktale and fairy tale anthologies and collections, a list of scholarly resources, a selection of relevant journal titles, and finally, an annotated list of quality Web resources. Other helpful features are a guide to tale type, motif, migratory legend and ballad, a guide to related topics and a general index.

Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales is a serious and scholarly treatment of a growing field of study. Readers will find the coverage of genres, cultural and regional groupings, and the discussions of themes, motifs and critical concepts very enlightening. However, the *Encyclopedia* offers another equally valuable service. Besides providing such useful definitions and background information for students and scholars, the *Encyclopedia* shows the direction the field has taken during the past 30 years as well as highlighting how these traditional folk forms have been integrated into modern media ranging from graphic novels to the Internet. It is not meant as a comprehensive study so there may be those who quibble about some of the topic selection. However, this work remains a unique and current contribution that gives readers a strong foundation. Without a doubt, academic libraries supporting courses in folk and fairy tales studies will want it in their collections.

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Pretty exciting. This is the first **Charleston Conference Observatory** endeavor! Based on input from more than 170 librarians, **CIBER research group** will conduct a **global library survey** to understand electronic resources challenges, trends, and best practices in tough economical times. Sponsored by **ebrary**, the survey will be available in the fall to all libraries, and results will be announced during the

The *Encyclopedia of Gender and Society* (2009, 978-1-4129-0916-7, \$350) is another entry in **Sage Publications'** growing list of social studies encyclopedias. Edited by **Jodi O'Brien** of **Seattle University** these two volumes contain more than 500 entries authored by scholars from academic institutions throughout the United States and the United Kingdom. This is a serious academic work and it is apparent that a major goal of this encyclopedia is to present gender as a "primary lens" through which society views itself. After spending some time with this set and examining its content, one is hard pressed to argue with that contention.

The *Encyclopedia* is divided into categories containing articles that reflect and highlight gender's centrality in human social life. These categories are wide ranging and include art, popular culture, and sports, body image and health, crime, economics, environment and ecology, politics, policy and social movements, race and ethnicity, marriage and the family, relationships, religion and spirituality, education, science and technology, sexuality and reproduction and gender identity. The set also has a number of what are called "framing" articles that set the tone. Entries like Gender Identities and Socialization, Media and Gender Socialization and Sexuality and Reproduction provide overviews that point to the defining role of gender. Individual articles also address subjects ranging from chivalry to cybersex and from transgender studies to teen pregnancy. The set does not shy away from controversy providing coverage of issues like female circumcision and genital mutilation, sexual slavery, honor killings and sterilization. The articles are written in a straightforward and factual style while being grounded in recent scholarship, as the individual article bibliographies show. Each entry has "see also" references and there is a Reader's Guide that groups related articles as well as an alphabetical list of all entries and a helpful general index.

Academic libraries supporting courses on gender and related studies will find the *Encyclopedia of Gender and Society* a highly valued addition to their collections. Not only does it stand on its own merits, with its focus on gender's role in society, this set is an obvious complement to other resources like **Macmillan Reference's** four-volume work *Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender* (2007, 978-0-02-866115-5, \$425).

Charleston Conference, November 4-7, 2009, in Charleston, SC, USA. "We are very pleased that our survey topic was selected entirely by the library community, and we would like to thank those who participated for their input and support," says **Professor David Nicholas**, Director of the **Department of Information Studies, UCL Centre for Publishing and CIBER research group**. "We realize that librarians are frequently asked to participate in surveys, and there have been a number of studies conducted this year. By having librar-

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Published by **Facts on File**, the *Atlas of the North American Indian* (2009, 978-0816068586, \$85), last revised in 2000, is now in its 3rd edition. Although called an atlas and containing 120 color maps as well as an additional 140 photos and illustrations, this book is more than a mere collection of maps and illustrations. Author **Carl Waldman's** descriptive text is equally valuable and together they combine to produce a highly informative reference.

Waldman organizes his book in seven chapters beginning with "Ancient Native Peoples" covering Paleo-Indians and Archaic Indians and then moves to a chapter on "Ancient Civilizations" where the focus is on civilizations in Mesoamerica, the Southwest, and the Mound Builders of the Midwest, South and Northeast. He then discusses "Native Lifeways" from a number of Native cultural areas followed by specific discussions of art and technology, clothing, forms of shelter, religion, languages, trade, transportation, and sociopolitical organization. The fourth chapter deals with the relationship between native peoples and early European explorers while the fifth chapter revolves around the numerous Indian wars and their history. The sixth chapter covers the impact of all of these changes on the Native way of life finally leading to a discussion of contemporary Native North Americans with a stress on US and Canadian government policies, the Native activist response and the resulting Native Renaissance.

The maps and illustrations are strategically place throughout the volume to integrate with the text. Maps range from plotting migration routes over the Bering Strait Land Bridge to profiling native population densities in 1500 to showing contemporary Native lands and communities in the U.S. In addition, there are drawings and photos depicting Native life from boats and canoes to masks and clothing. Taken together these maps and illustrations are visually compelling and they combine with the text to form an impressive whole. There are also numerous added features including a chronology running through 2008, a listing of Native Nations of the U.S. and Canada with languages and locations, major Native place-names in the U.S. and Canada, a list of museums, and historical and archaeological sites pertaining to Native North Americans, a glossary and a selective bibliography of overview studies.

The *Atlas of the North American Indian* is one of those single-volume references that cover a scholarly topic with enough appeal to be of interest to both public and academic libraries. Its reasonable price coupled with its subject coverage, makes the *Atlas* appropriate for either reference or circulating collections. (This is especially true given that there is a paperback edition available from **Checkmark Books** (978-0816068593, \$24.95).) 🐾