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From the Reference Desk

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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>

The *Encyclopedia of Epidemiology* (2008, 978-1412928168, \$350) is a new two-volume set published by **Sage**. It offers a scholarly but not over technical approach to a topic that is at the cornerstone of public health studies.

Editor **Sarah Boslaugh** and her contributors provided readers with close to 500 articles touching on a variety of themes. Coverage ranges from specific branches of epidemiology like molecular and genetic to related social issues like poverty and acculturation, and from health risks like obesity and unsafe sex to specific diseases like HIV and tuberculosis. While the intent is to be less technical and more accessible, there are also a number of articles that discuss statistics, research methods and other technical issues. Other areas getting serious attention include health care economics, public health infrastructure, ethics and biographies of major contributors to the field.

Quality production values are evident throughout this set. There is both an alphabetical list of all articles and a highly useful Reader's Guide providing "an overview to all the entries...as well as a convenient way to locate related entries within an area of interest." A number of charts, tables, maps and photos serve to complement and enhance the text while "see also" references lend added organization while a general index allows access to specific information. Bibliographies appropriate to the importance of the topic are also provided.

The *Encyclopedia of Epidemiology* is a unique offering. It provides students, researchers and professionals a single source that speaks to the multidimensional components and impacts of epidemiology. It will serve as a worthy complement to **Macmillan's Encyclopedia of Public Health** (2003, 0-02-865354-8, \$450). Medical and special libraries as well as academic libraries supporting public health curriculums should all give it serious consideration.

Another unique contribution to the health reference literature is the **Greenwood's Dictionary of Medical Biography** (2007, 0-313-32877-3, \$749.95).

Edited by **W.F. Bynum** and **Helen Bynum** with contributions from 384 scholars and professionals in the field, the *Dictionary of Medical Biography* provides researchers with 1,140 international biographies. There is coverage of men and women from over 100 countries as well as of prominent figures from Classical Antiquity and Medieval Europe. In addition, there are very helpful survey essays appearing in volume one that discuss various medical traditions including Western, Islamic, Chinese, South Asian, Southeast Asian and the Japanese tradition. These essays give the reader a historic foundation as well as establish an international perspective. They also provide substantial bibliographies that lead researchers to more in-depth treatments of various topics.

But naturally the bulk of the set is dedicated to the biographies. Each entry includes basic facts like birth and death dates and family information as well as full descriptions of the person's career and contributions. Bibliographies containing both primary and secondary sources are provided for each entry. There are also appendices in volume five that readers will find valuable. The first is a list of individuals by country, the second a list by field of activity, and the third, a list by birth/death dates. The set is tied together by a good general index that provides specific page access to the individuals covered as well as to relevant subject areas. Given that the set is continuously pagged, one minor improvement for any future edition would be providing a key listing the volume number with its related pages. While less important for facilitating access to the biographies, such a key would be helpful for more direct access to the subject coverage.

While **Gale's** updated eight-volume *New Dictionary of Scientific Biography* (2008, 978-0-684-31320-7, \$895) arguably sets the standard for general scientific biography, this five-volume set is a worthy companion focusing on the medical profession. In fact, taken on its own merits, the *Dictionary of Medical Biography* is a significant contribution. Its strong international coverage and the sheer number of biographies make it unique among other works on medical biography.

By providing serious, but accessible, scholarship and coupling it with an easy to use format, the *Dictionary of Medical Biography* is a reference that all types of libraries will want to consider.

The *Encyclopedia of American Jewish History* (2008, 978-1851096381, \$195) edited by **Stephen Norwood** and **Eunice Pollack** reflects the experience of an ethnic minority that has profoundly impacted our history. In a variety of essays, this reference traces American Jewish history from the first arrival of **Sephardim** in the

mid 1600's through contemporary Jewish-American experience.

Published by **ABC-CLIO**, this two-volume set is not your typical alphabetical listing of articles. It is arranged in 26 sections each containing essays focused on elements within the Jewish experience that range from American Jews in the Colonial Period to current demographics and from Zionism in America to Anti-Semitism. There are also articles that discuss various forms of American Judaism from orthodox to conservative to reform. In addition, the role of America Jews in politics, labor, the press, literature and the arts, as well as in business, entertainment, law, sports, the military, and other fields is covered.

As hinted at above, the entries are solid essays, not merely brief explanation and definitions. They are well researched and many have strong bibliographies while at the same time being written in a style fully accessible to the lay reader. However, some of the chapters seem uneven in their coverage. For example, in the section on Jews in political and social movements there is an article entitled "American Jews in Politics in the Twentieth Century" but there are not other survey essays dealing with the 18th or 19th centuries. And the section on American Jews and the Law has only one article, "The Jewish Justices of the Supreme Court." Hopefully, any future edition will provide additional entries in some of these areas. Added maps might also be considered. The three maps presented at the front of each volume are interesting but more maps would be an enhancement. The print is clear and easy to read while occasional black and white photos break up the text. There is a useful, and given the categorical arrangement of the entries, an essential, general index.

The *Encyclopedia of American Jewish History* will be a welcome contribution to American Jewish studies. While the coverage is sometimes more representative than comprehensive, there is currently nothing else as extensive in the reference literature. While still useful, **Garland's Jewish-American History and Culture: an Encyclopedia** (1992, 978-0824066222, via **Amazon**, UK) is dated and out of print. The *Columbia History of Jews and Judaism in America*, (2008, 978-0-231-13222-0, \$75) another recent release, is a single-volume that is perhaps more appropriate for circulating collections.

Taken together the essays in the *Encyclopedia of American Jewish History* offer the patient researcher an insightful and selective resource reflecting the diversity and importance of the Jewish contribution to America. Academic libraries supporting courses on ethnic history and Jewish studies will be well advised to add it to their collections, as would larger public libraries where there is interest.

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Facts on File has published the second edition of *Shakespeare's Language: A Glossary of Unfamiliar Words in His Plays and Poems* by **Eugene F. Shewmaker** (2008, 978-0816071258, \$67.50). The new edition is an update of a title first published 12 years ago and includes coverage of three plays recently accepted into the **Shakespeare** canon: the *Two Noble Kinsmen*, *King Edward III* and *Sir Thomas More*.

Using a variety of sources, author **Eugene F. Shewmaker** has assembled some 17,000 definitions, including 2,000 that are new to this edition. Besides the definitions, each entry has the part of speech, the word used in content within specific works identified by act, scene and line, as well as variant usages of the word when applicable.

Students and scholars will appreciate the painstaking research that has gone into this volume. Using sources like the *Oxford English Dictionary*, **Alexander Schmidt's Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary, and **R.D. Eagleston's** revision of **C.T. Onions'** classic *A Shakespeare Glossary*, this reference offers readers a valuable tool for gaining a fuller appreciation of **Shakespeare's** works. The introduction cites numerous examples that point to the richness of **Shakespeare** words and wordplay, while at the same time, providing an awareness of the challenges they present in gaining a full understanding of **Shakespeare's** poems and plays. Author **Shewmaker** also provides a list of essential sources for **Shakespearean** studies in both his section of acknowledgements and in the brief, but selective, bibliography ending the book.**

All in all, *Shakespeare's Language: A Glossary of Unfamiliar Words in His Plays and Poems* is a handy, easy to use and affordable resource that will find a place in both reference and circulating collections of both public and academic libraries. It should also find a welcomed home on the personal shelves of many interested students, scholars and lay readers.

Both the serious scholar and the dedicated history buff will be gratified to see the care and effort that has gone into **Bud Hannings' Chronology of the American Revolution** (2008, 9780786429486, \$125).

Published by **McFarland**, this book is far more than a listing of dates with short notes about related occurrences. It functions as a day to day account of military and political actions based on primary sources and historic records, particularly from the *Journals of the Continental Congress* and the *Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution*. In some ways the book acts as a broad index to both of these sources by providing the dates of particular events so researchers can check the *Journals* and the *Diplomatic Correspondence* for the complete accounts.

However, this book is far more than an index to primary sources. **Hannings'** work stands on its own as a reference by giving detailed descriptions of the events along with the actions of the major players. Naturally, the arrangement is by date with each entry subdivided by the city or state where the actions occurred. Whenever necessary, there is a section relating naval activities as well as the land engagements. As one reads through these entries the intimate involvement of **Congress** in day to day military affairs is apparent. The constant barrage of letters and correspondence both to and from **Congress** regarding both important and commonplace issues is revealing. However, the reader is also kept fully informed regarding the actions of the individual officers and relevant military units. The entries are all written in the present tense in an attempt to "bring the reader closer to the action" and illustrations are drawn from the **National Ar-**

chives as well as other public domain sources like **Benson J. Lossing's Pictorial field Book of the Revolution** published in 1860. Aside from the chronological arrangement there is an alphabetical index that helps readers find specific information. More use of subcategories would have been helpful in this regard. When looking for evidence of **Lafayette's** various military contributions being faced with a string of page numbers six lines long can be daunting.

Nonetheless, the *Chronology of the American Revolution* is meticulously researched and provides a wealth of information. **Mr. Hannings** displays a commitment to primary records that along with his devotion to detail, makes his work a valuable resource for any serious student of the American Revolution and its military history. Both academic and public libraries where there is interest in American history will want it in their collections. 🐾

Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

Column Editor: **Debbie Vaughn** (College of Charleston)
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Column Editor's Note: When I think of this month's reviewers I am reminded of a song that my grandmother and mother used to sing to me: "Make new friends, but keep the old. One is silver and the other gold." Not only are these pages graced with the thoughts of veteran **ATG** reviewer **Phillip Powell**, they are also filled with the insightful views of **ATG** newcomer **Todd Rix**.

While readers have read numerous reviews by **Powell**, they might be surprised to learn that he is also the ultimate cinemaphile of the golden age of Hollywood. Ask him any question about **Hitchcock**, **Bogart**, or **Hepburn** (**Katherine** or **Audrey**), and you simply cannot stump him. With his knack for remembering the minute details of a variety of film genres and his talent for connecting each actor and director to their contemporaries in the business, **British Film Noir Guide** is right up his alley.

Rix, the Instruction and Electronic Resources Librarian at **Coker College** in Hartsville, South Carolina, received his MLIS from the **University of South Carolina** in 2006. Not only does he teach **Coker** students the art of library research, he is also involved with **Coker's Integrated Library System**. Good library Web design takes a blend of technological dexterity, technical writing ability, and instruction skills. With the many hats he wears at **Coker**, we are lucky that one of them is **ATG** reviewer — his library expertise makes him the perfect reviewer of **Crash Course in Web Design for Libraries**. Happy reading, everyone! — **DV**

Keaney, Michael F. British Film Noir Guide. Jefferson, NC:
McFarland, 2008. 9780786438051. 269 pages. \$55.00.

Reviewed by **Phillip Powell** (Reference Librarian, College of Charleston)
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Everyone eventually finds their niche in life and it appears **Michael Keaney's** is cataloging, viewing, and reviewing films within the genre of film noir. He previously wrote the monumental *Film Noir Guide* (**McFarland**, 2003). Although this book is not readily available, it is assumed *British Film Noir Guide* is similar in format.

In the Preface, **Keaney** makes a gallant effort describing what film noir is and is not. Most straightforwardly, he defines noir as a "dark, visual style" which emphasizes

troubling plots, dreary settings, and unsettling characters. "Dragnet" and "Perry Mason" from early television both have noir qualities about them. He also spends several paragraphs telling how there are always exceptions. These are often dependent whether the film is American or European. **Keaney** states defining noir is often in "the eye of the beholder." It seems the plots were often centered on crime, the police, and often, a femme fatale. Yet, keeping close to the strictest sense of the film noir definition,

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