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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 *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World* (2009, 978-0195305135, \$750) is a major update and expansion of an already established and admired reference work. In this new six-volume set, editor **John Esposito** builds on his 1995 effort, the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, to offer an up-to-date, more comprehensive work that will appeal to a broad-based audience ranging from informed scholars to interested lay readers.

Some 550 experts and scholars have contributed a total of 1,025 articles covering historical, political, social, cultural, economic and religious topics from the birth of the **Prophet Muhammad** in the 6th century through the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Articles vary in size from brief entries as short as 250 words that amount to descriptive definitions to lengthy essays that treat a diversity of topics that range from Arabic Literature to the Muslim Brotherhood, Secularism to the concept of Fatwa, the Ottoman Empire to Sufism and Architecture to Marriage and Divorce. Some of the more lengthy treatments have up to four sub-entries and all have substantial bibliographies. There are also individual entries for specific countries where Islam is pre-eminent as well as for countries where it has significant impacts. In addition, there are articles that provide biographical information for both historic and modern figures as well as essays that discuss specific Islamic schools of thought like **Alevis**, **Druze**, **Khojas** and the **Salafi** groups. The articles are fact filled

and objective, often providing historical context as well as specific information.

The set is also equipped with a number of value-added features. While the set is text-rich with scholarly content, there are numerous black and white photos and illustrations that compliment the text. The first volume has a helpful chronology as well as an alphabetical list of all entries in the encyclopedia. There is also a list of the over 40 maps that can be found throughout the set. As hinted at above, there are bibliographies for each entry but they are selective containing primary sources as well as "important scholarly works." Relevant "see also" references are provided at the end of each article and there is a topical outline of all entries in volume six that also offers additional access to related articles. All articles are signed by the contributor and there is a full list of contributors along with their affiliate institutions and the entries that they authored in this last volume. These scholars are drawn from an international cast and are both Muslim and Non-Muslim. There is also a thorough and comprehensive 173 page general index providing volume and page access to the entire set.

Once again, **Oxford University Press** has provided an academic work that while intended for students and scholars will be equally useful to the interested general reader. Admittedly, the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World* is not nearly as comprehensive as **Brill's** massive twelve-volume *Encyclopedia of Islam* (2004, 978-9004141155, \$4,068). However, it is also far less imposing and

costly, and as such, far more accessible to non-scholars and libraries on tight budgets. While the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World* will not replace **Brill's** *Encyclopaedia of Islam* as the cornerstone in academic library reference collections, it will proudly stand beside it. In addition, it offers a viable alternative for larger public libraries that have neither the budget nor the need for the larger set. Most academic libraries as well as many larger public libraries will want to add it to their buy list.

(For those interested in the electronic access to the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, it is not available as a standalone resource but is one of the core reference sets in the *Oxford Islamic Studies Online subscription database*. According to the **Oxford University Press Website** at <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/Public/about.html>, it "encompasses over 3,500 A-Z reference entries, chapters from scholarly and introductory works, Qur'anic materials, primary sources, images, maps, and timelines." For complete pricing information or to subscribe, follow this link: [http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/Public/contact\\_us.html](http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/Public/contact_us.html).

Librarians interested in the print version of the **Brill** set should check out [http://www.brill.nl/m\\_catalogue\\_sub6\\_id7560.htm](http://www.brill.nl/m_catalogue_sub6_id7560.htm). Information about the *Encyclopaedia of Islam Online* can be found at [www.brillonline.nl](http://www.brillonline.nl). A free demo is available as are links to information about subscriptions and site licenses.)

## Acquisitions Archaeology from page 56

terms with much more information than we have ever had, while receiving much less money with which to acquire this vast amount of information — which is available to us in many more forms. The challenges before us now are paradigmatic; they must be faced strategically rather than fought reactively. Operation in crisis mode is not always rational and does not lend itself to long-term planning based on careful decision-making. One is required to react to a crisis, but to move forward one must plan ahead....

### Endnotes

1. **Flowers, Janet**. (1990). "The Charleston Conference in a Nutshell." And They Were There. *Against the Grain* 2:2 p. 2-3.
2. **Flowers**, p. 2.
3. **Thatcher, Sanford G.** (1997). "Thinking Systematically About the Crisis in Scholarly Communication." The Specialized Scholarly Monograph in Crisis: Or How Can I Get Tenure If You Won't Publish My Book? Conference sponsored by American Council of Learned Societies, Association of American University Presses, Association of Research Libraries; September 11-12, 1997, Washington, D.C. Online access: <http://www.arl.org/resources/pubs/specscholmono/thatcher.shtml>.
4. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. (2009). Oxford University Press.

## Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

Column Editor: **Debbie Vaughn** (College of Charleston) <vaughnd@cofc.edu>

**Column Editor's Note:** *What a timely review for the Charleston Conference edition of ATG. Librarian Thomas W. Leonhardt not only explores Richard Abel and Gordon Graham's edition Immigrant Publishers: The Impact of Expatriate Publishers in Britain and America in the 20th Century; he also looks at the many ways that information, books, and publishing impact society and vice versa. This resonates as one of the tenets of the Charleston Conference and ATG — linking together those who have their hands in the cauldron of information.*

While Tom is new to *Monographic Musings*, he is not new to *ATG*. As a contributing editor, he has added insight to this publication on everything from antiquarian booksellers to publishers' catalogs. He has been a regular contributor to the library journal *Technicalities*. On top of that, he has authored numerous books regarding technical services, library instruction, electronic media, and other topics. Many thanks to Tom for his most recent publication in this column.

Happy Charleston Conference and happy reading, everyone! — DV

**Immigrant Publishers: The Impact of Expatriate Publishers in Britain and America in the 20th Century.** Edited by **Richard Abel** and **Gordon Graham**. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009. 978-1-4128-0871-2. 254 pages. \$39.95.

Reviewed by **Thomas W. Leonhardt** (St. Edward's University)

*Of the making of books there is no end.* After reading this book you should have a better understanding of the Preacher's words however limited they were in hindsight. Although he had no idea of the proliferation to come, his observation about book-making is recalled regularly

and will continue to resonate as books continue to be made at a steadily increasing pace and made available in the traditional, impossible to improve codex format but also in electronic and audio versions. There is no end in sight and I rejoice.

*continued on page 60*