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Book Reviews -- Monographic Musings

Debbie Vaughn

College of Charleston, vaughnd@cofc.edu

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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.

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

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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.

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Immigrant Publishers, with a few exceptions, is not a scholarly treatment of its subject but rather a collection of fond reminiscences by those, again with some exceptions, who knew and worked with the publishers, mostly European Jews who fled the Nazis and moved to the United States and England just before and during World War II. By saying that it isn't scholarly, **Hank Edelman's** four essays to the contrary, I do not mean that you won't find useful and interesting facts in these chapters because you will. The authors provide much personal information but also reliable information derived from others (conversations and interviews) and from published histories and primary sources from publisher archives and research libraries.

The authors do not shy away from expressing their personal opinions while admitting that not everyone who reads their words will agree with them. These opinions and memories, some fond some not so fond, are what I enjoyed most about the book. I could find names, places, and dates in published sources and publishing archives but given the contributions that these publishers made, mostly in the scholarly publishing world, I was pleased to learn about the human beings whose drive, ambition, and passion contributed to the world of learning.

One gem that I uncovered in this book was the story of "**Kurt Enoch: Paperback Pioneer**," by **Gordon Graham**. I had never heard of **Mr. Enoch** but his work has enriched my life over the years and continues to do so, usually after visiting a second-hand bookstore.

When **Kurt Enoch** arrived in New York in October 1940, he was a penniless refugee. At

the age of forty-five, the only business he knew was paperback publishing. He had started his own imprint in Germany in the early 1930s; transferred to Paris in 1937; and opened a branch in England. Now it was all gone, swept away by the tides of war, which had also swept him and his family, like tens of thousands of other European Jews, onto the shores of the United States, a haven of peace and a refuge from persecution, where they had the chance to rebuild their lives. By the time of his death in 1982, he had launched several businesses in the US, most notably **New American Library**, which helped to reshape paperback publishing in his adopted home (41).

Kurt Enoch's story, a European Jew fleeing the Nazis, is the common theme running through virtually every chapter in this book but I highlight him because of his contribution to paperback publishing, most notably the **New American Library** and its two lines that I personally benefited from, *Signet* and *Mentor*, both launched in 1948. During my high school days and while serving in the Army, my book stores were the racks found in Post Exchanges and the *Signet Classics* were my books of choice with their incredible list of some of the greatest writers ever. Thank you, **Mr. Enoch**. Although you died in 1982, I nevertheless tip my hat to you.

I also enjoyed "**Robert Maxwell: Man of Dash and Determination, Champion of Dissemination**," by **Albert Henderson**. It is a lively, frank, and affectionate portrait of **Robert Maxwell** that also brings back fond memories through some of the names in the essay: **Bob Miranda**, **Otto Rapp**, and **Stechert-Hafner**, to name a few. **Henderson** also provides a note that will be of interest to most if not all *Against the Grain* readers: "He [**Maxwell**] not only knew thousands of people in the business, he had astute opinions. He became an advocate of some, as he did of **Katina Strauch** and her **Charleston Conference**. On the other hand, he would take an instant dislike to anyone who behaved unprofessionally (127)."

For several years, I was on the editorial board of *Library Acquisitions: Practice and Theory* and as a member, enjoyed memorable dinners hosted by **Bob Miranda** during the midwinter and summer conferences of the **American Library Association**. *LAPT* was one of **Maxwell's Pergamon** journals and the dinners were his way of thanking us and the editors of his other journals, for our volunteer work.

Henderson ends his remembrance with **Mr. Maxwell's** death and a fitting eulogy to a man who made his mark after all.

Unfortunately, all the deals and all the assets that tagged along could not address his quagmire of liabilities. His naked lifeless body was found floating near the Canary Islands late that year [1991], perhaps an accident, perhaps suicide, perhaps murder. **Robert Maxwell** was born in poverty and he died facing catastrophic obligations, giving fresh meaning to the old proverb, "Give a beggar a horse and he'll ride it to death."

The horse lives on. Whatever the critics say about the man, the once-invisible colleges that he championed should be grateful for his encouragement. As a hero of science dissemination, **Robert Maxwell** rode a monster wave of Cold War competition until it crashed on the Moon. He challenged the establishment with the same dash and determination that earned him the Military Cross in his youth. He brushed aside obstacles, developed ideas, made deals and capitalized on his knowledge of knowledge and people. He liberated German and Soviet science journals from political captivity. He recognized promising specialists and specialties that had been stifled by establishment hierarchies. He explored new publishing technologies — cold type composition, offset printing, computers and microforms — to increase the options available for dissemination. Proud of his accomplishments, **Maxwell** ran afoul of the greater hubris of higher education. No matter that he will never be nominated for sainthood, **Robert Maxwell** served science and the greater good (139-140).

Other publishing greats treated in this volume include **Maurits Dekker**, **Eric Proskauer**, **Walter J. Johnson**, **André Deutsch**, **Kurt and Helen Wolff**, and **Frederick A. Praeger** and many others.

This is an important book but only if it is read, not to remember these pioneering and daring publishers, but so that we won't forget them and what they achieved. I have no doubt that if these great people were still alive (a couple of them are), they would be exploiting the Internet and eBooks and all of the opportunities that this digital/electronic medium offers, but they would not abandon the printed book and journal. They lived and thrived at a time when we desperately needed them, whether we knew it or not, and reading these various essays and remembrances makes me glad that our lives and careers overlapped enough for me to say that I was, for a brief while, a small part of a chapter in publishing, librarianship, and bookselling that is all but over but not forgotten. 🐾

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