June 1998

From the Reference Desk

Tom Gilson

College of Charleston, gilsont@cofc.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>

Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gilson, Tom (1998) "From the Reference Desk," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 10: Iss. 3, Article 18.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.2793>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

From the Reference Desk

Column Editor: **Tom Gilson** (College of Charleston) <gilson@cofc.edu>

Although it is the end of the budget year and overspending is an anathema, new reference titles keep emerging which tempt the most cost-conscious librarian. Once again subject encyclopedias top the list of interesting new titles, although biographical guides, filmographies and a chronology add spice to this month's selections.

A weak link in the reference literature has been greatly strengthened. Oxford University Press has just released the long-awaited *International Encyclopedia of Dance* (1998, 019509462x; \$1250). Since 1982 three publishers have taken a crack at making this encyclopedia a reality and it has finally happened. The result is a landmark, scholarly work which does justice to a field of growing academic interest. Naturally biographies of major dancers, choreographers, directors and other artists who have influenced dance are included in the encyclopedia. However, the emphasis here is on dance, not on personalities. Articles ranging from Australian Aboriginal Dance to the Stuttgart Ballet and from Ice Dancing to Dance and Movement Therapy are included in this six-volume set. True to its title, this encyclopedia is international in scope. In fact, one of its most appealing traits is its worldwide focus. Articles covering the Czech Republic to the Caribbean, from Indonesia to Central Africa, and from Romania to the Middle East are included. These articles examine secular, folk and traditional, theatrical, urban as well as other dance forms unique to each locale. Each article has its own bibliography with entries for both books and journal articles, the majority of which are in English. As you would expect, the set is well indexed. Along with the index, there is also a complete alphabetical list of all the entries in the encyclopedia as well as a synoptic outline of contents. This synoptic outline provides a real service in giving the reader a sense of the conceptual scheme of the set. The *International Encyclopedia of Dance* is one of those pioneering works which will set the standard for years to come. Even at this price, academic libraries supporting dance programs and many large public libraries will want to make the investment.

Gale has just published a new four-volume set which will appeal to public, high school, and academic libraries. The *Gale Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes* (1998, 0787610852, \$349) offers a thorough look at "historical, cultural and current information" relating to some 400 Native American tribes. Each article includes a brief history as well as a short section on current issues facing the tribe. However, the emphasis here is on cultural aspects like religion, language, buildings, subsistence, clothing, healing practices, etc. Article length ranges from the ten pages which discuss the Iroquois to the three pages given to the Etowah. The set is attractive and nicely il-

lustrated with maps, sidebars and black and white photos, enhancing both its look and usefulness.

This encyclopedia's organization is also a strength. The four volumes are divided into thirteen regions ranging from the Arctic to Middle America and within each region, alphabetically by tribe. Each volume has a cumulative index as well as alphabetical lists of the tribes treated in the entire set. The bibliographies are brief but useful, including some references to tribal home pages. Information for many of these tribes is also contained in *Macmillan's Encyclopedia of World Cultures* (1996, 081611840x; \$1100) and the dated *Dictionary of Indian Tribes* (1993, 0937862282; \$375). However, the contents of this set are more focused than the *Macmillan Encyclopedia*, and more timely than the *Dictionary*. The *Gale Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes* is a quality source of background information on most major North American Native tribes. It is a worthy addition to any library interested in Native American studies.

The nature of scholarship is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary. This trend is obvious with the appearance of references like Kluwer Academic's *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (1998, 0792345967; \$739). Its eight volumes are dedicated to both the impact of language on education as well as issues related to the teaching of language. This encyclopedia does not employ a traditional alphabetical arrangement. Rather, each volume covers a specific area of concern like literacy, bilingual education, testing and assessment, knowledge about language and second language education. The articles are scholarly essays with strong bibliographies covering the specific issues related to the topic covered in the volume. As such, each volume can stand alone as a thorough review of its topic. Most of the essays follow a standard format which includes discussion of early developments, major contributions, work in progress, problems and difficulties and future directions. International in scope with contributors from over forty countries, this set is intended for an academic audience. Each volume contains tables-of-contents for all eight volumes and the last volume has cumulative name and subject indexes. These features help unite the set. The *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* will be of most use to academic libraries supporting education programs as well as those with strong interest in language and linguistics.

Academic Press weighs in with some high priced, but significant contributions. Both the *Encyclopedia of Mental Health* (1998, 0122266773; \$550) and the *Encyclopedia of*

Applied Ethics (1998, 0122270657; \$625) should be actively considered by academic libraries and larger public libraries. Each of these sets is a scholarly look at subjects of major interest to students, scholars and practitioners.

The *Encyclopedia of Mental Health* is a three-volume set which examines many of the same topics covered in Academic Press' *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior* (1994, 0122269209; \$650), in fact some of the articles are reprints from this set. However, *Encyclopedia of Mental Health's* main focus is not the psychology of behavior. It is the biological, societal and cultural influences on mental health which are highlighted in articles ranging from infertility to body image and from phobias to biofeedback. Each article starts with an outline and a brief glossary of terms used in the essay. The essays are scholarly but accessible to the informed layman. Each essay has an up-to-date bibliography containing references to both books and journals. The arrangement is alphabetical by subject but there is an index which provides access to specific aspects of the topics treated. In addition, a table of contents for the entire set appears in each volume. Another helpful feature is the "see" references interspersed throughout the text of each article. All in all, a high quality production. I am troubled by the lack of explanation regarding the overlap between this set and the *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior*. There is a note after each reprinted article but no mention in the Preface about the close relationship between these two sets. Also, as with other Academic Press encyclopedias, the contributors' affiliations are given but their credentials are not thoroughly explained. At these prices, it is only fair to be up-front about these issues.

The *Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics* is unique. References like Salem Press' *Ready Reference: Ethics* (1994, 0893563951; \$290) and Garland's more scholarly *Encyclopedia of Ethics* (1992, 0824099060; \$150) treat ethics from a broader perspective. Macmillan's *Encyclopedia of Bioethics* (1995, 0028973550; \$450) does a marvelous job covering ethical issues, but it is confined to biology and medicine. The *Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics* is distinctive in that it discusses ethics as they apply to a variety of fields. Much of the emphasis is on how ethics play a part in real world issues like affirmative action, gun control, juvenile crime, nuclear testing and welfare policies. In addition, there are articles covering theoretical perspectives ranging from Aristotle

continued on page 40

Reference Desk
from page 38

nized much like the *Encyclopedia of Mental Health* described above, this set is arranged for ease of use. An additional feature which is very helpful is the Contents by Subject Area section which is replicated in each volume. Here all the articles in the set are listed under 12 specific categories like environmental ethics, legal ethics, ethics and politics, ethics in education, etc. Grouping the articles like this gives the reader a sense of the scope for the entire set as well as that of each category. The *Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics* is an impressive effort which will find wide readership among students and professionals alike.

A second edition of the critically acclaimed *Presidential Also-Rans and Running Mates, 1788-1996*. (McFarland, 1998; 0789403101, \$99.50) has just been released. An additional sixteen years worth of elections are covered in this new edition including forty-one new biographies which brings the total to ninety-five. This volume is also a more handsome production being both illustrated and having larger print as well as a more pleasing page layout. While in terms of presidential elections, the politicians represented here are all also-rans, many were well known or controversial in their day, while others made lasting contributions to American politics. Biographical sketches of people like **Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, William Jennings Bryan, Al Smith, George Wallace, Geraldine Ferraro and Ross Perot** are included. Along with the biography, each entry contains an analysis of the candidates' qualifications and a bibliography. The arrangement is by election year with each set of biographies being introduced by a description of the election and the vote totals. However, I have one complaint. Little, if any, effort has been made to update the existing biographies. They seem verbatim from the first edition. The bibliographies have been somewhat updated, but more effort could have been put forth here. Still this is a new edition worthy of purchase for the added biographies as well as the improved production.

Following its beginnings with the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, the European Union has been beset with difficulties. Getting a sense of the history and politics involved is not easy. However the publication of the *European Union Handbook* (1996, 1884964281; \$75) by Fitzroy Dearborn, makes the task more manageable. The chapters are grouped into four main sections: History and Content, Politics, Economics, and Law and Society. Each chapter is a straightforward, overview essay which addresses issues like European Union structures and institutions, the politics of European integration, economic competition and citizenship, immigration and asylum. Charts, statistical tables and selected maps are found throughout, complementing the text. Each essay is followed by a helpful annotated bibliography. All of the contributors are experts in their field and their credentials are fully described at the end of each essay. Rounding out the volume is a very useful chronology, a glossary, a section of biographical sketches, a selected bibliography and the index. The more one examines this book, the more one is impressed. It offers a lot for the price. My only reservation is that this book is dated. For example, while there is an essay giving the complete background of the European Monetary Union, recent developments relating to issues like the Euro are not covered. In spite of this, the

European Union Handbook is still a good choice for reference collections where Gale's *European Union Encyclopedia and Directory* (1996, 1857430093; \$385) is considered too involved and expensive. Many libraries with strong collecting interest in international organizations and politics may want copies for both reference and circulating collections.

Film historians and those interested in African American culture will wel-

come Larry Richards' *African American Films Through 1959: A Comprehensive Illustrated Filmography* (1998, 0786403071; \$65). Published by McFarland, this book lists over 1300 films about African Americans with predominantly African American casts or films which have an African American as its top star. Each entry contains the film title, release date, the production company and distributor, the cast and whether it was a short, feature or documentary. When available, additional details like the film's length, whether it was sound or silent, color or B&W are also included. Most of the entries contain a brief synopsis or review excerpt. Richards also includes references to newspaper previews and reviews located during his research as well as the Library of Congress catalog numbers. The book is illustrated with film posters which break up the text and add a nice visual touch. African American films are an obvious passion for Richards who is a librarian at the **Free Library in Philadelphia** as well as the host of the television program, *A Cinema Apart*. He has spent a great deal of time and effort assembling the information contained here. This book will take its place on library reference shelves among other black filmographies like *Frame By Frame I* (Ind U Pr. 1979, 0253164230; \$65) and its supplement *Frame By Frame II* (Ind U Pr. 1997, 025333280x; \$49.95).

Chronologies are wonderful. (Just ask a reference librarian who has tried to help a student find an event occurring during the year the student was born.) But chronologies do more than assist in finding specific events. They can also give us a sense of flow, a sequencing of the events which taken cumulatively, create major historical shifts. Everett Jenkins Jr., with his *Pan-African Chronology II* (McFarland, 1998 0786403853, \$65) has given us such a resource. It continues the work started with his first *Pan-African Chronology* (1996, 0786401397; \$49.95) also published by McFarland. While recent chronologies like Charles M. Christian's *Black Saga: the African American Experience* (Houghton, 1995; 0395687179; \$35) and Sharon Harley's *Timetables of African American Experience* (Simon & Schuster, 1995. 0671795244; \$35) concentrate on the black experience in the United States, this book offers more. Arranged by year from 1865 until 1915, this reference relates the story of the African diaspora worldwide. Within each year, events are arranged by regions including the United States, the Americas, Europe, Australia, Asia and Africa. Specific dates are given when available and a section on related historical events is also included. Jenkins' research is thorough and his coverage impressive. An index giving both the year of occurrence and the page number offers additional access to specific events. A brief but solid bibliography rounds out the volume. Jammed full of facts relating to both major and minor events, this book should find a place on shelves in public, academic, and high school libraries.

Published by Guilford Press, the *Insider's Guide to Mental Health Resources Online* by John M. Grohol (1997, 1572302623, \$36.95) is a handy resource for professionals and students alike. The first two chapters serve as an introduction. Chapter 1 covers the basics of email, newsgroups, Web browsers, as well as providing useful advice on search strategies. In the second chapter, the pros and cons of specific search engines, search guides and meta-search engines are discussed. However, the majority of the book offers listing for specific sites. The coverage is diverse dealing with topics like disorders and treatment information, employment and continuing education, professional associations, relevant publishers, journals and bookstores, available software, and online therapy groups. As an added feature the author rates all of the Web sites referred to in the *Insider's Guide*. The criteria are briefly discussed but like most rating systems this one is subjective. It should be taken as a guide not as gospel. By online, the author means on the Internet, particularly Web resources. However, he does include a chapter on library references and databases in which he offers the following: "serious researchers will still conduct their literature searches, for the most part, in a library, because libraries can still easily outperform the online world in the depth and breadth of information available." This is needed advice, especially for students who assume that everything they need is on the Web. Given the ephemeral nature of some of the information on the Web, online updates to *Insider's Guide* can be found at the author's Web site <http://www.insidemh.com>. All in all, a useful publication which merits serious consideration by libraries.