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From the Reference Desk

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From the Reference Desk

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

Now that the *Charleston Conference* is over, things are returning to normal. With so many fine programs engaging the interest of librarians and publishers, it is hard to concentrate on writing reference reviews around conference time. However, it is encouraging to note the growing interest in reference publishing, both electronic and print. Two preconferences, one of which dealt with "Electronic Resource Collection Development" and the other which discussed "How Libraries Buy," directly and indirectly highlighted reference publishing. During the conference, reference got special attention with one session focusing on "Buying the Reference Product" while one of the lively lunches looked at the "Need for Electronic Review Sources for Reference Products." Reference is emerging from the publishing backwater and getting the notice it deserves. But enough of that, there are a number of new reference titles which are worthy of consideration, so let's get to it. — TG

Routledge has just published a one-volume *Biographical Dictionary of Psychology* (1997, 0-415-09997-8, \$195) which would be an obvious addition to most academic library collections if it were not so pricey. Edited by Noel Sheehy, Anthony J. Chapman and Wendy Conroy, this book focuses on the same need for biographical information about leading psychologists as Leonard Zusne's book of the same title did in 1984. (Greenwood, 0313240272, \$115). This volume offers biographical details, listings of principal publications and further readings, as well as essays outlining the major contribu-

tions of over 500 psychologists. In a sense this volume expands Zusne's work, for unlike it, this *Biographical Dictionary of Psychology* includes psychologists who are still alive, beginning its coverage with the advent of experimental psychology in the mid-nineteenth century and carrying on to the present. Inclusion was determined by content analysis of major psychology subject encyclopedias and introductory texts, citation analysis based on count and significance of journal and examination of the award listings of major psychological societies. Given the subject, it is not surprising that the entries in this volume are dominated by Americans and Europeans. The biographies are made accessible via four indexes: name, area of interest, institution and key term. Overall, this is a solid scholarly contribution which along with Zusne's book and Greenwood's *Women in Psychology: A Biobibliographical Sourcebook* edited by Agnes N. O'Connell and Nancy Felipe Russo (1990, 0313260915, \$69.50) offers quality coverage for most academic libraries.

Librarians and others trying to make sense of the ever-expanding world of CD-ROM and multimedia publishing will welcome the publication of the *Multimedia and CD-ROM Directory* originally published by TFPL Multimedia in the UK, but made available in the United States by Grove Dictionaries/Stockton Press (1997, 1561592072, \$295). This directory is actually a merging of two other directories the *Multimedia Yearbook* and the *CD-ROM Directory*. A two-volume set, the *Multimedia and CD-ROM Directory* will be published annually. (According to the publisher, a CD-ROM version of the directory is also available and will be published twice a year.) The first volume starts with an introduction including industry facts and figures

and is followed by a series of articles on relevant industry issues like publishing, product development, multimedia users and distribution and markets.

However, the bulk of the vol-

ume is devoted to an international listing of the major companies who create and sell multimedia software and development tools, content-based products like CD-ROMs and other multimedia CDs. Each entry contains the company address, phone and fax numbers, email address, contact person and a list of the company's primary activities. Information like product type and intended platforms is included for some of the companies. Most entries also offer a brief description of the company. Volume 2 lists the titles of the individual CD-ROMs and includes the series title, name of the publisher, county of publication, subjects covered, data type, language, a description of the content, frequency, systems requirements and price (individual and network). By my sample count, close to 19,000 titles are included. A listing of the publishers follows the title listings and gives addresses, phone and fax numbers, email addresses and contact person as well as the titles published. The set is rounded out by a subject index and glossary of industry terms. The directory seems to rely on information provided, by the companies and publishers so there is some inconsistency in the information contained in the individual entries. But given the amount of information provided this is a minor point. While the *Multimedia and CD-ROM Directory* is very helpful for identifying multimedia products, producers and publishers, those interested in coverage of bibliographic and other type databases available on CD-ROM (and online) should consider the *Gale Directory of Databases 1998* (1997, 0-8103-4931-0, \$355). Libraries looking for a guide to just the developers, producers and providers of multimedia products may want to consider *Bowker's Interactive Multimedia Sourcebook, 1997* (1996, 0-8352-3817-2, \$135) as well.

Gale Research has just released the first two volumes in another continuing reference series which is sure to find a place in many public, academic and high school libraries. *Novels for Students* (1997, ISSN 1094-3552, \$55/vol.) pinpoints some of the most studied novels in high school and college introductory English classes. Each volume provides fine overviews for each novel covered. Contained in each essay are brief author biographies, plot summaries, character analysis, major themes, writing style, historical context, critical overview and brief excerpts from specific criticism. In addition, each essay has sidebars including information on media adapta-

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tions, topics for further study, then and now contrasts of significant events, and a "What Do I Read Next" section. Not only will students find these essays helpful in providing information about the novel but with these sidebars, they can get some additional ideas for paper topics, a perennial concern. A bibliography of the sources quoted in the essay as well as a list of other critical sources "for further study" complete each entry. Cumulative Author/Title and Nationality/Ethnicity indexes are provided as well as Subject/Theme indexes specific to each volume. It looks like Gale has come up with another set which is sure to be popular and useful. These essays offer students an excellent starting point and give them a solid grounding for further exploration.

Mary Snodgrass has authored another one-volume literary encyclopedia for ABC-CLIO. *The Encyclopedia of Frontier Literature* (1997, 0-874336-888-X, \$65) focuses on the "vast trove of literature about the exploration and settlement of North America." This is a daunting task and one for which the author deserves credit for pursuing. One of the difficulties faced by a reference book on frontier literature is the definition and scope of the topic. It is indeed vast, maybe too vast for one volume. Included within the rubric of frontier literature are novels, plays, poetry and short stories, as well as journals, letters, travelogues, and other first person accounts. The entries in the encyclopedia cover individual authors and personalities, specific genres like poetry, short fiction and Native American oratory, frontier types like mountaineers, prospectors and cowboys, as well as motifs like captivity and law and order. In addition, there are interesting entries which focus on the portrayal of women in frontier literature as well as on the treatment afforded Native Americans and other minorities like African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans. However, there are some curious editorial decisions. While they are mentioned on a number of pages in the encyclopedia, there is no separate entry for Lewis and Clark or their journals. At the same time there is an entry for D.H. Lawrence who is not best known for his contribution to frontier literature. The book is enhanced by an index and a number of useful sections including listings of both major works and authors of frontier literature, a timeline beginning with the publication of Bartoloma de Las Casas' *History of the Indies* in 1532 and stretching to the present, and bibliographies of both

primary and secondary sources. The reference works in the area of frontier literature have for the most part been bibliographic in nature and an encyclopedia which helps define the genre is welcome. While not the final word, the *Encyclopedia of Frontier Literature* will be of value to libraries collecting in this area. For a list of other references relevant to frontier literature, consult, as well, the second edition of Richard W. Etulain's and N. Jill Howard's *A Bibliographical Guide to the Study of Western American Literature* available from Free Spirit Press (1995, 0-8263-1644-1, \$39.95).

The World Wide Web is in a state of constant flux contributing to a sense that it is a perpetual work in progress. However, there is an emerging stability among certain types of Web sites, particularly government, organizational and educational, which gives books like Don MacLeod's *Internet Guide for the Legal Researcher* (1997, 0-939-486-46-6, \$55) merit. Published by Infosources Publishing, this second edition acts as a resource guide to Web sites of particular value to both novice and experienced legal researchers. This guide leaves little to chance starting with a definition of the Internet and then leading to explanations of communications and retrieval protocols, listservs, usenet and relay chats before

going on to chapters about law-related index pages and search engines, federal Web sites, state and local resources and relevant reference Web sites. Much more than a list of helpful URL's, this reference describes, evaluates and guides researchers to the most productive sites and suggests the best links for legal information from those sites. Many of the entries contain a picture of the site's home page giving a sense of the overall site contents. *The Internet Guide for the Legal Researcher* will be of use to anyone wanting to utilize the Internet and World Wide Web in their legal research. Even with the increasing stability of some of these sites, timely updating is still a concern so two updates are planned for 1998 and can be ordered for an additional \$42. Another source of interest for guidance on legal

research is Allison G. Burgess' *The Lawyer's Guide to the Internet* published by the American Bar Association (1995, 1570731497, \$29.95). An excellent online guide to legal resources on the Web can be found at the **Findlaw Web site** <<http://www.findlaw.com/index.html>>.

Striking a chord with this reviewer, as well as many other male baby boomers, is Everett Aaker's *Television Western Players of the Fifties* published by McFarland (1997, 0-7864-0284-9, \$85). Focusing on the heyday of the television Western, this book "charts the careers and appearances of every actor and actress who had a regular role in a Western series" during the 1950's. If an actor or actress is missing from this biographical dictionary I would be hard pressed to name them. Each entry contains biographical and family information and covers the actor's/actress' career from first break to current status while it concentrates on the roles played in 1950's Westerns. Naturally, all of the major stars are covered: James Arness, Roy Rogers, Clint Eastwood, Lorne Green, Amanda Blake, Hugh O'Brian, James Garner, etc. But it is not just the major stars who get treated. If you ever wonder what happened to people like Will Hutchins, Dorothy Provine, Jock Mahoney, Ty Hardin and Jay Silverheels, *Television Western Players of the Fifties* is the place to look. The entries are well written and full of solid information and interesting tidbits, including quotes from the actors/actresses themselves. A filmography, list of television series and miniseries, and a brief bibliography follow each entry. The volume is indexed and contains a helpful appendix which lists the various Westerns in alphabetical order by title, and includes dates, time slot, network, number of episodes produced, and major players. Obviously, more focused than Les Brown's *Encyclopedia of Television* (1992, Gale, 0-8103-8871-5, \$55), this reference is both informative and entertaining. Libraries collecting in this area might also consider McFarland's *Western & Frontier Film & Television Credits 1903-1995* (1996, 0-7864-0158-3, \$175).

Another recent set developed by Gale Research that seems best suited to high school students and first and second year undergraduates is the *American Eras* series. This is a projected eight-volume set which "provides detailed information on the eras of pre-20th century America." The initial volume is entitled the *Development of the Industrial United States, 1878-1899* (1997, 0-7876-1485-8, \$85). The second volume, *Civil War And Reconstruction, 1850-1877* (1997, 0-7876-1484-X, \$85) was released in August and

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is the volume which is the subject of this review. Judging from *Civil War And Reconstruction*, this set is useful for the information it contains but its real contribution may be in the organization of the material. This book is arranged to allow a review of the Civil War and Reconstruction from a variety of perspectives. The first chapter is a chronology of world events giving students a sense of context followed by ten others offering a variety of perspectives. Chapters on the arts, business and the economy, communications, education, government and politics, law and justice, life styles and social trends, religion, science and medicine and sports and recreation are included. Each of these "perspectives" chapters starts with a chronology of events followed by a section which overviews the topic being covered. In the next section, "Topics in the News," specific developments and events as well as their impacts are discussed. After this is a section called "Headline Makers" which focuses on important individuals. Brief bibliographies are interspersed throughout "Topics in the News" and "Headline Makers" as topics and individuals are covered. Each of the ten perspective chapters ends with a list of relevant

contemporary publications, giving students the opportunity to pursue and sample works directly reflective of the time. This list of primary source publications is a valuable addition. There are other more specific sources giving more in depth information but *Civil War and Reconstruction 1850-1877* does the service of bringing the history of the times together in a useful and understandable way. With its multi-perspective approach, this book, and hopefully the rest of the set, offers students a broader viewpoint stressing issues like lifestyle and education as well as politics and business. Teachers will also find this approach of value in helping them integrate developments in these areas. Overall, this set merits consideration as a source for hard core information as well as providing background from which more in-depth research can spring.

Modern Irish Writers: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook edited by Alexander G. Gonzalez (1997, Greenwood, 0-313-29557-3, \$95) is the most recent entry in the growing canon of Irish literature reference works. It, along with the publication of the *Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* (1996, 0-19-866158-4, \$55) by

Clarendon Press and Robert Hogan's revised and expanded *Dictionary of Irish Literature* (1996, 0-313-29172-1, \$135) give libraries interested in this area the basis for a solid collection. In a sense, *Modern Irish Writers* supplements and enhances Hogan's fine work (which I reviewed in the June 1997 issue of *ATG*, p.68) offering more coverage of major themes as well as brief sections on the critical reception afforded the authors discussed. The bibliographies at the end of each entry are also more substantial in that they contain references to criticisms as well as a list of the author's writings. Although the arrangement is alphabetical by author, there is also an index as well as a list of contributors including their credentials. While Hogan's *Dictionary of Irish Literature* covers over 1,000 Irish writers from the eighteenth century to the present, *Modern Irish Writers* covers less than eighty authors, the vast majority of whom wrote and gained prominence in the twentieth century. Libraries in need of a general reference on Irish literature would obviously be advised to select Hogan's work first. But *Modern Irish Writers* is a worthy enhancement.

Call for Ideas/Papers/Speakers/etc. The 1998 Charleston Conference — November 5-7, 1998, Charleston, S.C.

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If you are interested in leading a discussion, acting as a moderator, coordinating the lively lunches or simulation rooms, or would like to make sure we discuss a particular topic, please let us know. The Charleston Conference prides itself on creativity, innovation, flexibility, and informality. If there is something you are interested in doing, please try it out on us. We'll probably like it ...

The Planning Directors for the 1998 Charleston Conference include — **Barbara Dean** (Arlington County Public Library), **Robin Lent** (U. of New Hampshire), **Heather Miller** (SUNY-Albany), **Katina Strauch** (College of Charleston) and **Judy Webster** (University of Tennessee).

Send ideas by **June 30, 1998**, to Barbara Dean, Technical Operations Center, 4000 Stringfellow Rd., Chantilly, VA 22021. Phone (703)222-3139; fax (703)222-3135. Internet: <bdean@leo.vsla.edu>.

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