September 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. 4, Article 17.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.2956>

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>

Another classic just got classier. Following in a proud tradition beginning with Thomas Baldwin's *Pronouncing Gazetteer* first published in 1845, through the *Columbia-Lippincott Gazetteer of the World* (1952), comes the brand new *Columbia Gazetteer of the World* (1998, 0-231-11040-5; \$750). Editor Saul B. Cohen, and the editorial team at Columbia University Press have produced a major geographical reference reflective of the immense change over the last half century. Expanded into three volumes containing some 30,000 new entries, this gazetteer is a comprehensive and authoritative update of a previous standard in the field.

Naturally, coverage includes entries on physical features like: continents, islands and peninsulas; oceans, bays and channels; and mountain ranges, deserts and glaciers. Political subdivisions like cities, states, countries, provinces, capitals and districts are included as well as significant national parks, historical sites, airports, canals and military bases. While US geography is most thoroughly represented, the scope is internationally diverse with entries for place names in the largest countries like China, Russia, India and Brazil to entries for the smallest principalities like Monaco, Liechtenstein and Andorra. Entry length varies from a few sentences to encyclopedia length articles, depending on the significance of the place or political unit. Each entry starts with the main heading, transliterated into English when necessary, followed by the correct pronunciation. Making up the remainder of the entry is the descriptive location including things like longitude, latitude, area, elevation, distance from other significant features and population. When appropriate, information on climate, agriculture, industry, etc. is also included.

I have only one concern. The *Columbia Gazetteer of the World* may promise a bit more than it can deliver. In the introduction, editor Cohen says that included in the gazetteer are also the names of special places like theme parks, shopping malls and stadia. I do not know much about significant shopping malls, but when there is no entry for Disney World I do question the coverage of theme parks. (Thank goodness there is an entry for Yankee Stadium or I might have lost all faith.) The point is, such geographical locations strike me as being more appropriate for a specialized directory, not a worldwide gazetteer. However, this is a minor admonition given this reference's overall quality.

Admittedly the *Columbia Gazetteer of the World* is expensive. But, even at the price, it is a must for any library with aspirations toward having a strong, up-to-date geographical reference collection.

Literature professors, students and other admirers of American poetry will welcome the publication of Fitzroy Dearborn's *Encyclopedia of American Poetry: The Nineteenth Century* (1998, 1-57958-008-4; \$95). This book was originally published to serve as companion to the anthology *American Poetry: The Nineteenth Century* (1996, 1-8830-1136-1; trade paper \$14.95) published by the Library of America and edited by Yale University's John Hollander. However, it is rich and substantive enough to stand on its own merits, although it might be better titled, a bio-critical encyclopedia. The number of topical articles is minimal; there are only a handful in the entire book. The vast majority of articles deal with individual poets and their work.

Coverage ranges from great poets like Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson to the minor lights like Paul Hamilton Hayne and Fitz-Greene Halleck. Admittedly, biographical and critical information on some, but not all, of these poets can be found in scattered volumes of Gale's *Dictionary of Literary Biography* and their

Nineteenth Century Literature Criticism series. However, there is little else that includes all of these nineteenth century American poets in one package. Handy and convenient, this book also offers quality. The entries are compact and critical, ranging from three to five pages in length with bibliographies of both the poet's selected work, and further critical readings. Another plus, women poets are not overlooked. Of the 115 poets covered, 21 are women. In short, the *Encyclopedia of American Poetry: Nineteenth Century* will be very useful to students beginning their research, as well as to interested readers in need of a good overview essay.

An even more significant contribution from Fitzroy Dearborn is the *Encyclopedia of Interior Design* (1997, 1-884964-19-2; \$270). It is one of those references which helps define an emerging discipline. There are a number of excellent encyclopedias which concentrate on architecture including the *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects* (1982, 0-0292-5000-5; \$425), John Wiley's *Encyclopedia of Architecture Design, Engineering & Construction* (1990, 0-471-63351-8; \$950) and Cambridge University Press' *Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World* (1998, 0521564220; \$995). There are also references which cover design broadly like *Facts on File's Dictionary of Twentieth Century Design* (1990, 0-8160-1811-1; \$35), Wiley's *Design Encyclopedia* (1994, 0-471-02455-4; \$60) and St. James Press' 3rd edition of *Contemporary Designers* (1996, 1-55862-184-9; \$160). But there is no comparable encyclopedia specific to interior design. The *Encyclopedia of Interior Design* is a comprehensive and inclusive two-volume set which successfully brings together the assorted elements of architecture, furniture design and decorative art. Articles cover individual designers and architects, design movements, decorative styles, as well as specific furnishings and materials from plastics to porcelain. The emphasis is admittedly Western, but there are articles on Middle Eastern design as well as survey articles on countries like India, Japan, China and Russia. The basic arrangement is alphabetical and as you would expect, there is a useful index, as well as "see also" references linking to related articles. The biographical entries are particularly strong. They not only provide information about the individual's contributions, but give the reader a brief "Who's Who" type of biographical sketch, a list of selected works and publications, and a substantial list of further readings.

Editor Joanna Banham is also to be commended for providing a thorough list of contributors and their credentials. My only real criticism is the lack of color plates and the poor quality of the binding. As with other Fitzroy Dearborn books, if heavily used, this set will require an eventual trip to the bindery. Nonetheless, the *Encyclopedia of Interior Design* is an essential purchase for both academic and public libraries collecting in this area.

Among political scientists there are both number crunchers and theoreticians. The former will have a field day with McFarland's *United States Congressional Elections, 1788-1997* by Michael J. Dubin (1998, 0-7864-0283-0; \$235). The amount of research that has gone into this book is mind-numbing while at the same time, highly commendable. Dubin's work is more specialized than the 2nd edition of Congressional Quarterly's *Guide to U.S. Elections* (1985, out of print) and fills in and updates the information on congressional elections.

The returns, in numbers and percentages, of over 36,000 elections starting with the 1st Congress in 1788 through the 105th in November, 1996 are collected in this book. In addition, each congressional election is carefully examined, noting and explaining things like incomplete returns, resignations or deaths of candidates, and inconsistencies in the ways states tabulate their results. Another major feature is the listing of sources following each entry, as well as the bibliography at the end of the volume. Dubin's use of primary sources like manuscript returns, state registers, and local newspapers is truly impressive

continued on page 50

From the Reference Desk
from page 49

and provides a treasure-trove for researchers.

The book is chronologically arranged by the number of the Congress and includes a helpful candidate index. There is also an index of the nearly 800 political parties which have participated in congressional elections. Unfortunately, some of the entries list so many pages that without some idea of which election you are interested in to help place the pages, they are practically useless. Another criticism is the lack of maps. I found myself wanting to compare the physical change of congressional districts over time and, while there are comprehensive works like the Free Press' *Historical Atlas of United States Congressional Districts, 1789-1983* (1982, 0-0292-0150-0; \$195) available, selected maps would be a help. In spite of these concerns, the overall value of this reference is undeniable. All academic libraries supporting political science programs will want to consider it.

While there has been an increase in the number of reference books devoted to Native Americans and their culture, few deal specifically with art. St. James Press tries to fill part of this vacuum with their *St. James Guide to Native North American Artists* (1998, 1-55862-221-7; \$155). Editor Roger Matuz along with an advisory board of curators, scholars, artists and librarians selected over 350 artists to be profiled. The list includes twentieth-century artists working in various forms including painting, pottery woodcarving, glassware, mixed media, sculpture, photography and basket weaving. The entries begin with brief biographical sketches and continue with lists of both group and individual exhibits, collections featuring the artist's work and bibliographies. This information is followed by an essay centered on the artist's work and career. These essays provide a good amount of interesting and useful information, but are more descriptive than critical. Over two-thirds of the artists are from the United States with the rest from Canada. (Actually, one artist is listed as being from Mexico, and oddly, one from the UK). There are a number of useful indexes, including ones by artist name, by tribe, geographic location, and medium. The lack of color plates and the uneven quality of some of the black and white photos are a disappointment but the print quality and overall layout are fine. This book should find a home in academic and public libraries with interest in this area.

Garland Publishing scores again with another entry in their *Encyclopedias in the History of Science* series. This one is a two-volume set entitled *Sciences of the Earth: An Encyclopedia of Events, People and Phenomena* (1998, 081530062X; \$150). Like the other volumes in this series, this is a high-quality production which focuses on the historic evolution of the science under discussion. The coverage is extremely diverse and crosses interdisciplinary lines. As one would expect, processes like desertification and fossilization, as well as theories like plate tectonics and geomagnetism, and phenomena like earthquakes and ocean currents are included. But, this encyclopedia also discusses ideas that now seem quaint or plain unbelievable. Articles like Geography and Magic, Auroras in Folklore and Mythology, and Cosmology and the Earth in Medieval Europe point to the sometimes strange history of scientific ideas. In addition, there are entries on the professional societies and institutes which have played major roles in shaping the geosciences as well as articles on specific historiographical issues. Interestingly, there are no individual biographies. However, references to influential thinkers and scientists are made throughout the encyclopedia and there is a separate name index guiding the reader to this information. All articles are written in a serious and scholarly fashion, but can be understood by readers without a technical background. "See also" references link related articles and there is a very helpful "Categorical Listing of Entries" which groups similar articles under broad headings. This is in addition to a standard subject index. Each entry is signed and contains a useful bibliography.

Sciences of the Earth: An Encyclopedia of Events, People and

Phenomena is a work which can stand on its own as an historical encyclopedia or be seen as a complement to more technical references like the *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Earth Sciences* (1996, 0-02-883000-8; \$220). In either case, libraries should give it serious consideration.

Garland has also just released another interesting work entitled *Women in the Third World: An Encyclopedia of Contemporary Issues* (1998, 0-8153-0150-2; \$135) which offers an unabashed feminist perspective to this important topic. Admittedly, there have been a number of recent references on various aspects of women's studies like Greenwood Press' three-volume *Women's Studies Encyclopedia* (1989-91, 0-313-24646-7; priced individually), Facts on File's *Encyclopedia of Women's History in America* (1996, 0-8160-2625-4; \$45) and *Ready Reference: Women's Issues* from Salem Press (1997, 0-8935-6765-5; \$290). However, none of these books concentrates on the specific issues and conditions faced by women in developing countries. This encyclopedia is actually a collection of essays organized under broad issues like politics, marriage and family economics and production, health and demographics, the environment and sex-role ideologies. The essays are relevant and provocative, but I must mention one caveat. *Women in the Third World* has a point to make and to her credit, the editor readily admits it. The unequal treatment of women is taken as a given which often results from the oppression "that arises from patriarchal ideology." Bolstering their arguments with facts and statistics, the various contributors make a strong case, but this is a reference book with an obvious viewpoint.

The essays are meant to appeal to students and scholars, and the international list of contributors is complete with credentials and major publications. The bibliographies at the end of each essay are strong and there is also a final section consisting of an additional annotated bibliography. These features reinforce the overall scholarly nature of this work.

In structuring an encyclopedia like this, the index bears a heavy burden. Unfortunately the index here is disappointing and would be much improved by better use of sub-categories. For example, looking for information on wife abuse one finds the entry "wife beating" which offers a see reference to "violence." But, under "violence" the reader is confronted with references to 36 different pages under the sub-category "against women," with a further 9 pages under the sub-category "domestic." One could guess that the information is under "domestic" but cannot be sure until actually looking. The point is that readers should not have to guess and then wade through page numbers to pinpoint the specific information they need.

In spite of these problems, *Women in the Third World: An Encyclopedia of Contemporary Issues* is worth considering. It provides a wealth of information which is both timely and scholarly. Academic libraries supporting Women's Studies programs will want to add it to their collections.

Another reference book that libraries with an interest in women's studies might want to consider is ABC-CLIO's *Feminism: A Reference Handbook* by Judith Harlan (1998, 0-87436-894-4; \$39.50). This is another volume in ABC-CLIO's *Contemporary World Issues* series which gives both useful information as well as a guide to other resources. *Feminism: A Reference Handbook* concentrates on what author Harlan calls the second and third waves of feminism, which she says began with the publication of Betty Friedan's *Feminist Mystique* in 1963. The book is divided into eight sections, including a brief introduction and history, a chronology, selected biographical sketches, a directory of organizations and listings of print, Web and video sources. The remaining sections address social and educational, as well as political and economic issues. Each issue treated in these sections contains its own useful chronology and bibliography.

continued on page 51

Book Reviews

Column Editor: **Tom Leonhardt** (Oregon Institute of Technology)
<leonhart@oit.edu>

Sul H. Lee, editor. *Economics of Digital Information: Collection, Storage and Delivery*. New York: Haworth Press, 1997. 117 p. \$ 29.95 hardcover. Published simultaneously as *Journal of Library Administration*, Vol. 24, no. 4, 1997.

Ling-yuh W. Pattie and Bonnie Jean Cox, editors. *Electronic Resources: Selection and Bibliographic Control*. New York: Haworth Press, 1996. 252 p. \$39.95 hardcover. Published also as *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, Vol. 22, no. 3/4, 1996.

Reviewed by: **Mary Robinson Cross** (System Librarian, Columbia College, Columbia, S.C.)
<marycross@colacoll.edu>

All of us who work in or with a library are in the business of providing information and consequently must come to terms with digital or electronic resources. As library administrators we are concerned among other things, with the planning for, financing of, and dealing with the legal issues connected with adding electronic resources to our collections. As acquisitions librarians,

we concentrate on selecting databases and other electronic resources. As catalogers we apply methods of bibliographic control to these resources. Publishers create and vendors distribute electronic resources. These two collections of papers are important texts for each of these groups of information handlers as they provide guidance in making decisions concerning what resources to acquire, why to acquire those resources, when to acquire the resources, and how to purchase, process, present, and preserve them.

The initial paper in *Economics of Digital Information: Collection, Storage and Delivery*, "Digital Information and the Library: Planning and Policy Issues" by **Thomas Shaughnessy**, is perhaps the best place to begin the readings. We are shown how the general principles of library planning apply to planning the digital library. In "Negotiating Digital Information System Licenses Without Losing Your Shirt or Your Soul" **Barbara McFadden Allen** describes the efforts of the **Committee on Institutional Cooperation** to work with vendors in licensing policies and discusses the problems the CIC has encountered along the way. The CIC is a consortium of twelve university and research libraries with experiences that are very similar to those of consortia around the world. **Kelly Frey** in "Business Models and Pricing Issues in the Digital Domain" discusses six models for digital commerce: "free"

continued on page 52

From the Reference Desk from page 50

This book gives the reader a broad overview of recent feminist history and concerns. It is not, nor is it intended to be, an in-depth study. Larger libraries may choose to place it in circulation rather than reference, but *Feminism: A Reference Handbook* will be of use in high school, public, as well as some undergraduate libraries.

Contemporary Legal Issues is another handy series of inexpensive references from ABC-CLIO. It is actually a series of dictionaries covering a variety of topical legal issues. The newest addition is *Conservation and the Law: A Dictionary* by Debra L. Donahue (1998, 0-87436-771-9; \$39.50). This reference focuses on laws governing the use and preservation of natural resources, primarily on public lands, and secondarily on private lands. (A better title may have been *Land Use and the Law*.) Although the emphasis is on federal law, selected state and local laws are included. Within this scope, the coverage is thorough and the definitions are clear and well-written, while not overly technical. The individual definitions describe and explain the relevance of specific laws and cases, legal concepts, government agencies, special interest groups and individual players. There are helpful "see also" references to related definitions and a useful index. Other features include a bibliography, a brief directory of organizations and tables of significant cases, laws and regulations.

Conservation and the Law: A Dictionary is suitable for both public and undergraduate libraries. Laypersons and students will appreciate the clear and precise definitions this book offers, and faculty and professionals in the field may want personal copies for quick reference. With its narrow focus on land use, some libraries may also want to consider its companion volume *Environment & the Law: A Dictionary* (1998, 0-87436-749-2; \$39.50).

Coming this Fall from Ashgate...

The American Symphony Neil Butterworth

"This volume is a mine of information and it fills an important gap in the musician's bookshelf."

— Robert Layton, author of *A Guide to the Symphony*
(Oxford University Press, 1995)

In the first book to focus on the American symphony, Neil Butterworth surveys the development of the symphony in the United States from early European influences in the last century to the present day, and asks why American composers have shown such allegiance to a musical form which their European contemporaries appear to have discarded.

Complete with a comprehensive catalogue of symphonies and an extensive discography, *The American Symphony* is an indispensable reference work.

ISBN: 1-85928-459-0 October 1998 95 music examples & 17 b/w illustrations
370 pages \$59.95, Hardback

Ashgate

Old Post Road Brookfield, VT 05036-9704
Toll-Free: (800) 535-9544 Fax: (802) 276-3837
info@ashgate.com www.ashgate.com