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From the Reference Desk

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From the Reference Desk

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When three publishers release reference works on the same topic within a year or so of each other, either that topic is very important or it has been neglected. In the case of the topic of world slavery, both are true. The importance is self evident and up until now, it had been neglected. However, with the publication of Oxford University Press' *Historical Guide to World Slavery* (1998, 0195120914; \$65); ABC-CLIO's *Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery* (1997, 0874368855; \$150) and the *Macmillan Encyclopedia of World Slavery* (1998, 002864607X; \$195), all that has changed.

The *Historical Guide to World Slavery* paints its picture with broader brush strokes than the two encyclopedias. But it does so in very scholarly fashion. Editors Seymour Drescher and Stanley L. Engerman have assembled a list of contributors with impressive credentials and the results show it. The *Historical Guide* does not attempt to be comprehensive but deals more with larger issues like gender and slavery, law (including Roman, Islamic, United States and Latin American), the slave trade, economics, demography and contemporary slavery. There is also more emphasis on regional slavery, witness the 46 pages which deal with various aspects of Caribbean slavery. A concern with current historiography is another strength. Mention of new scholarship is made in a number of entries and there is an extensive series of articles on historical research including an overview essay and articles on research related to slavery in major parts of the world. Each article has its own valuable list of further readings and of course, the volume is indexed.

ABC-CLIO's two volume *Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery* touches on all of the issues mentioned above, if not in the same depth. However, it offers the added dimension of numerous biographical entries, coverage of individual slave revolts and articles on specific laws, cases, etc. There are also entries on topics as diverse as pyramid building (for the most part slaves were not employed), the Encomienda System of the Spanish New World, the Punic Wars, the Free Soil Party, the weekly newspaper *Liberator* and Aristotle's *Politics*. Good use of "see also" references is made, and while each entry has its own brief list of further readings, there is a 46-page bibliography divided into broad categories following the body of the *Encyclopedia*. There is also an introductory essay entitled "Slavery in Human History" which provides useful background and sets the context for the issues covered in the *Encyclopedia*. In short, editor Junius P. Rodriguez has blended his talents along with those of over 200 contributors to provide an encyclopedia worthy of consideration by public and undergraduate libraries.

The most visually impressive and professionally produced of these three references is the *Macmillan Encyclopedia of World Slavery* edited by Paul Finkelman and Joseph C. Miller. It combines some of the strengths of the other two references by offering the discussion of major concepts given in the *Historical Guide* along with the specifics, and more comprehensive coverage of the *Historical Encyclopedia*.

However, although the *Macmillan Encyclopedia* may be similar in coverage to the *Historical Encyclopedia*, the organization is different. There are more individual entries in the *Historical Encyclopedia*. With the *Macmillan Encyclopedia* the reader may have to rely more on the index. For example, the *Historical Encyclopedia* contains a separate entry on the Ashanti while one must consult the index of the *Macmillan Encyclopedia* to discover that the information is in one of the articles on West Africa. On the flip side, the *Macmillan Encyclopedia* offers a more holistic approach with larger inclusive entries. The entries on the Slave Trade, Plantations and Per-

spectives on Slavery are just a few examples where varying aspects of a larger topic are brought together nicely. A number of added features are a plus for the *Macmillan Encyclopedia*. The editors provide a timeline and a very useful set of 25 maps. Another added feature is a "Synoptic Outline of Entries" consisting of nine broad categories broken down into sub-categories. Browsing this outline gives the reader a sense of the conceptual framework of the set as well as leads to related entries. The bibliographies are helpful and the inclusion of relevant statistical tables lends an added academic flavor.

Admittedly, there is considerable overlap in topic coverage among these three titles. However, the emphasis and individual treatment of specific issues, as well as the different organization of these references, make each valuable. If one could be seen as supplemental it would be the *Historical Guide*, but it too can stand on its own merits. Ideally, given the complex and controversial nature of the topic, libraries should consider purchase of all three of these references. This is particularly true for academic libraries. Public libraries should definitely consider one or all of the encyclopedias.

As mentioned in my last column, I want to take a look at two complementary Congressional Quarterly publications which should appeal both to the serious student of electoral politics, as well as to those of us who are curious or bemused. The third edition of the *Guide to U.S. Elections* (1994, 0871879964, \$295) is a standard reference which public and academic librarians turn to with trust and confidence. It is more than a guide to statistics and election returns. The *Guide to U.S. Elections* provides a one-volume history of the American electoral process with its rich tradition and unique quirks. Features include extensive chronologies of presidential conventions and elections, sections on House, Senate and gubernatorial results, discussions of reapportionment and redistricting, the Electoral College, presidential primaries, political party profiles, and a separate section on politics and issues from 1945 to 1992. As with most CQ references, the writing takes the form of objective, but lively reportage of the relevant facts and issues. Interested readers will

continued on page 38

find the *Guide to U.S. Elections* to be a treasure-trove of fascinating, useful and authoritative information. Libraries with patrons interested in American politics and election results will want to make the investment.

The *Congressional Elections 1946-1996* (1997, 1568022484; \$34.95) is an update to the Congressional election coverage offered in the *Guide to U.S. Elections*. As one might expect, the vast majority of this book consists of reprinted information found in the *Guide* along with updated election results and narrative text. Those libraries already owning the *Guide*, but needing the more current coverage will want to consider this book. Also libraries in need of a circulating copy of a book concentrating on post-war Congressional elections may want to add it to their collections.

Many literary references center on the author. The various Gale *Literary Criticism* series and the Scribners' *Writers* sets come most readily to mind. There are also a few that concentrate totally on genre like the *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. And then, there are those references like the *McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of World Drama* which try to serve up both simultaneously. Fitzroy Dearborn's, fine new two-volume set, *Encyclopedia of the Novel* (1998, 1579580157; \$270) falls within this last category.

While authors and individual works are well represented, the emphasis in this encyclopedia is on the novel as a literary genre. In his introduction, editor Paul Schellinger says the purpose of the set is "to help foster an understanding of the novel as a form." As one examines the list of entries and reads through selected essays, it is obvious that he and his contributors have succeeded admirably. Taken as a whole the *Encyclopedia* gives the reader an overarching sense of the genre as well as offering answers to specific questions.

International in scope, the *Encyclopedia of the Novel* contains over six hundred articles ranging from those on the individual writers and specific works to essays on the technical aspects of the genre, types of novels and varying critical approaches. In addition, there are a number of survey articles which trace the evolution of the novel in different regions and countries. The articles are well written, being both scholarly and readable. The

book also contains a selected bibliography pinpointing other references and significant journals, as well as books on genre-based analysis and regional contexts. In addition, each entry has its own specific bibliography. The indexing is good and includes both a title and general index. There is also a full list of the contributors and their current affiliations. Any way you look at it, the *Encyclopedia of the Novel* is impressive. It is a much needed treatment of a major literary art form that will be of use to scholars and general readers alike. Both academic and public libraries should consider it.

Public librarians will kill for a reference book like Ellen Luchinsky's the *Song Index of the Enoch Pratt Free Library* (Garland: 1998, 0815329180; \$200). Since the early 20th century, librarians at Enoch Pratt have indexed the song books received by the library. The *Song Index* is the product of all that diligent effort, and can now be shared by libraries throughout the country. Over 2100 song books are indexed in this two-volume set. In order to get an idea of the coverage, contrast that to the just over 710 collections indexed in Patricia Havlice's *Popular Song Index* and its three supplements.

All of these song books are listed in an initial "Bibliography" section and each is assigned its own entry number. The main body of the index is an alphabetical list of titles which includes the composer's name, alternative song titles and the entry number for the song books in which the song can be found. All types of songs are indexed including hymns, rock ballads, novelty songs, show tunes, arias and protest songs. While the vast majority of songs are in English, there are also some songs in African, Asian, European and Native American languages. The second volume contains the composer index and a sources index, i.e., musicals, operas, movies etc. Regarding the composer index, most of the entries are by last name only. As the editor explains "over the years the index was compiled, the first names of the composers were often omitted." While attempts have been made to identify the first names when possible, this general lack of first names is a shortcoming. However, this omission aside, the *Song Index* will prove highly useful to librarians and patrons trying to locate favorite songs. (Another worthwhile indexing project would be to list the same songs by ethnic, national or cultural source. A possible idea for a future volume three?)

Routledge's *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* (1998, 0415068088, \$290) fills an important gap in the reference literature. It provides the interested reader with the first English language encyclopedia which treats in a comprehensive and scholarly fashion this important body of non-Western literature. Evolving from a proposal to create a biographical dictionary, the scope of the current publication has expanded to include much more than sketches of important figures in the Arab literary tradition. The *Encyclopedia* also includes articles on genres ranging from travel literature to religious poetry and on literary types from sermons to shadow-plays. In addition, there are entries on significant influences ranging from Platonism and Sufism and on physical processes like calligraphy and printing. In total, over 1300 articles cover the three main periods of Arab literature; the classical (pre-Islamic to 1258); transitional (1258-1798) and modern (1728-present). The articles are clearly written, thoroughly researched and highly informative. One of the strengths of this work is the particular care which is taken not to impose Western constructs on the Arabic literary tradition. In fact, where they exist, differences in Western and Arabic traditions are pointed out. Each article has a brief bibliography as well as "see also" references. The "see also" references can be particularly helpful in gaining the full picture of an individual writer's contribution. For example, to discover the impact of the great prose writer Ibn Qutayba on the development of the encyclopedia one must read the entry on the medieval encyclopedia, not just the article on Ibn Qutayba. The body of the encyclopedia is followed by a glossary, chronological tables and a subject index. Academic libraries with interest in non-Western literature will want to add this unique work to their collections.

ABC-CLIO has recently begun publishing a series of reference books which deserve attention. Starting in December of 1997 with the publication of *Benjamin Franklin : A Biographical Companion* (0874369312; \$55) by Jennifer L. Durham, they have issued a total of three biographical reference books in this series which will appeal to many libraries. The other two are *Susan B. Anthony: A Biographical Companion* (1998, 0874369487; \$45) by Judith E. Harper and *Thomas Jefferson: A Biographical Companion* by David S. Brown (1998, 0874369495; \$45).

continued on page 41

All three of these books are similar in format and written in a lively and informative style. But the reason I find these books so compelling is the fascinating and complex personalities they center on. The zealous intensity of Susan B. Anthony's social activism, the paradox of Jefferson, the great Republican yet plantation slave owner, and Benjamin Franklin, the eminent statesman, scientist and eighty-year-old flirt are fully reflected. These biographical companions provide the reader with more than just the facts related to the careers and accomplishments of these three people. As David S. Brown says in his introduction to the Jefferson volume, the "key issues, events and personalities that shaped Jefferson are analyzed." The contents of the other two volumes offer a similar treatment.

The arrangement is alphabetically by subject and each entry is followed by a list of related articles, and in the case of the Benjamin Franklin and Susan B. Anthony volumes, a brief list of 2-3 suggested further readings. (Oddly the Jefferson volume lists only one further reading per entry.) Each of these biographical companions also contains a chronology, a general bibliography, a few relevant primary source documents and an index. All are visually enhanced by black and white illustrations.

Anyone interested in the lives and contributions of these historic figures, will find these books both useful and enlightening. While intended as reference books, some libraries, particularly academic, may find these volumes more appropriate for circulating collections.

The second edition of Academic Press' *Encyclopedia of Immunology* (1998, 0122267656; \$925) has been published and builds on the accomplishment of the original. The first edition, referred to by *Choice* as an "excellent, comprehensive reference work" has been expanded from three to four volumes with 630 entries, of which 64 are new. The majority of the other essays have been rewritten to reflect issues central to the field as well as new discoveries. Highly technical articles on popular concerns like AIDS and anti-oxidants as well as those on the immune system's role in diseases like leukemia and other cancers are included. In addition, there are articles exploring various forms of antigens, cytokines and cell types like mast cells and dendritic cells. The *Encyclopedia* also includes articles on non-human

immune systems like the feline, reptilian and porcine. The whole set is illustrated with charts, tables, photos and drawings which complement the text effectively. Each article contains a solid bibliography and substantial use of "see also" references is made. A brief glossary and an alphabetical list of all the articles contained in the *Encyclopedia* are also in each volume, as is the complete index to the set. The index, while thorough and comprehensive, can be cumbersome. It refers to page numbers only. There is no reference to volume number or any indication of which pages are in each

volume. However, this is a minor quibble.

As with most specialized encyclopedias this work is not meant for the beginning student or lay person. However, it will find an appreciative audience among those doing research in related sciences. Graduate students and professionals in fields as diverse as microbiology, protein chemistry, physiology, as well as immunology will benefit from this work. All in all, this is a very impressive reference. Medical libraries, and other special libraries should also give it strong consideration.

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