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Book Reviews -- Monographic Musings

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for the non-specialist consisting of 300 selected introductory articles. These articles represent each of the core subjects. This study guide fulfills its purpose in acting as overview of each subject and as a guide for initial exploration. But the real show piece of volume 20 is a 435-page comprehensive subject index that provides access to relevant volume and page numbers.

As impressive as the organization of the print set is, the electronic version has its own set of organizing tools with unique qualities. The "see" references of the print version are replaced with direct links to related articles within the text. In place of the contents list in volume 20, you can use the A-Z Browse function to browse and link to articles titles alphabetically. Substituting for the topical index is the Subject Browse function providing hierarchical browsing of articles from core subjects like ecology down to the more specific microbial ecology, then to protozoan ecology, and finally to the article on protozoan symbioses. Of course, all of the article titles listed here are linked directly to the text. In short, the electronic version provides many of the same finding aids as the print but adds the functionality of a Web-based product. However, all is not perfect. The electronic subject index is still in beta mode and for those items contained in the index, the linking is less than satisfactory. Trying to locate information on ABO blood types I clicked on "ABO blood group system" in the index and was given a selection of 4 articles. I clicked on the article entitled *Blood Group Incompatibility* and was taken to the beginning of the article, not to where the information would be in the article. Obviously it would be more helpful to be taken to where the information is located, immediately, and not have to scroll. Compounding the problem, using the "find" command in my browser did not locate "ABO" even though a short scroll down the page found it.

Search functionality is always a big advantage of a Web-based resource and the same holds true for the *ELS* online. There are a number of search types available including the quick search function, the standard search and the advanced search. Quick search is limited to a word search in the article titles. Standard searching is far more useful but it requires getting use to. While it defaults to searching in articles titles, it allows searching by author, keyword, free text, and illustration. But some clarification is needed here. Keyword searching is really descriptor searching. All articles are assigned "keywords" or descriptors and it is these descriptors that are searched in a keyword query. In

order to search the full text you need to click the "free text option." Another useful functionality is the ability to limit by article type: introductory, secondary or special essay.

While the standard search allows boolean searching via a drop down menu between two terms or phrases, the advance search uses a template to allow more complex boolean searching among different fields. You can enter search terms in text boxes to link authors with article titles, keywords or free text.

The Web version of the encyclopedia offers other interesting possibilities. It can be tailored to individual use via the *My ELS* function. This allows users to create password protected Web pages "within which articles and illustrations can be bookmarked, and organized into customizable folders." In addition, the Workgroups function extends this capability to groups of students by enabling them "to share bookmarks, links and other material on a private part of the *ELS* site." With all this functionality, *ELS* has the potential to become the focus of individual research, as well as a center for community learning. Of course, it is an open question whether students or faculty will use it in this way, but the potential is there. One thing *ELS* developers should consider, if they haven't already, is the possible relationship of *ELS* with existing courseware like *WebCT* and *Blackboard*.

There is little doubt that the *Nature Publishing Group* is committed to the online *ELS* as its premier version of this product. It is a work in progress with big plans. *ELS* is continually updated and notice of the most recent, as well as the next planned update are posted on the home page. In the "What's New" section of the Web site there are links

to the most recently added articles, as well as a list of those that are forthcoming. There are also links to the latest research as reported in the journal *Nature*. No such updating is feasible with the print set, and in fact no new print editions are planned. This 20-volume set is the first, and last, print version of this reference work.

All this is important because the *Nature Publishing Group's ELS* model is an emphatic statement that electronic reference publishing is moving to a new level. While the print version of *ELS* is an exceptional reference work, it has limitations in terms of updating and functionality that are overcome in an electronic environment. What the *Nature Publishing Group* is saying is that the value added by the electronic version of this reference work outweighs the aesthetics of the print set. This is reflected in their pricing model. As *Sean Pidgeon* says in his *ATG* interview (see page 60), "the bundle price is not structured as the full print price plus a bit extra for online, but rather as full price for online plus a discount on print (\$1500 for online + \$3360 for print). The principal income stream for this reference work is the anticipated annual subscriptions to the online version, not sales of the print set.

As *Fran Wilkinson* and *Linda Lewis* noted in this issue's lead article (page 1) "Five years ago the question seemed to be 'Do we want it in electronic format in addition to print?' Now the question seems to be 'Do we want it in print, in addition to electronic format?'" That may still be an open question in some circles, but the *Nature Publishing Group* is betting the long term answer is No. How many other reference publishers are coming to the same conclusion?

Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

Column Editor **Debbie Vaughn** (Reference Librarian,
College of Charleston) <vaughnd@cofc.edu>

Once again, I am indebted to *Phillip Powell* and *Michael Litchfield* for their critical contributions. —DV

Lepage, Jean-Denis G. G. *Castles and Fortified Cities of Medieval Europe: An Illustrated History*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2002.
0786410922. 335 pages. \$75.00.

Reviewed by **Phillip Powell** (Reference Librarian, College of Charleston)
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The serious, hardcore medieval scholar will quickly skim past this book. There are many other efforts that satisfy the research needs of the medievalist. *Castles and Fortified Cities of Medieval Europe: An Illus-*

trated History is written for someone with a basic interest in medieval warfare as it occurred in Western and Southern Europe from collapse of Rome until approximately 1,600.

continued on page 72

For the medieval novice, though, **Jean-Denis Lepage** has written and illustrated as complete a chronicle as might be necessary. The reviewer, being one who has a mild interest in topics medieval, found the writing to be clear and focused and the excellent illustrations to be highly detailed and instructive.

Lepage's writing is indeed quite enjoyable to read. Judging by the book's title, one would expect descriptions of military architecture, which there is; but also, **Lepage** takes a rather leisurely look at life overall during medieval times. He speaks of social, religious, economic, and political life as readily as he discusses fortress architecture, military tactics, weaponry, and armor. Although it may appear the author often meanders from the book's primary emphasis, it is apparent that military life did not operate in a vacuum during this time and was integrally associated with the day-to-day life of the noncombatant population. These were often walled towns and not just military outposts whose sole purpose was to house and supply soldiers. **Lepage** has the knack of going off into slightly different subject territory just as discussions about donjons, machicolation, and enceintes grow wearisome.

As interesting as his writing may be, the real stars of **Lepage's** book are his pen and ink illustrations of these castles and fortified cities. The array of representations is mind-boggling with well over 100 drawings of entire castles or parts of castles from all over. From Britain and working south and east through France, Germany, Spain and Italy, all the way to Jerusalem, the reader can clearly see the various approaches builders took in constructing fortifications. The chronological arrangement of the book ably demonstrates the evolution of castles and fortresses from wooden and earth defenses (motte and bailey) to highly defended, often palatial, edifices. In addition, **Lepage** has included numerous examples illustrating the various parts of a fortification. It pays to keep close tabs on unfamiliar terminology. Since these example illustrations appear only once, though, it might be helpful to have a notation to which the reader could refer back.

As highly appreciated as *Castles and Fortified Cities of Medieval Europe* is, the ending left the reviewer quite dissatisfied. The final paragraph begins to discuss the emergence of universities in Europe with a particular mention of the Sorbonne. And then it stops. Approximately 25 pages of illustrations follow this. The pattern established earlier was that the text would resume after the illustrations. There was nothing except a rather innocuous one-paragraph conclusion. Did the author run out of time? Space? Interest?

Sherrin, Ned (ed.). *The Oxford Dictionary of Humorous Quotations*. New York: Oxford UP, 2001. 0198602898. 576 pages. \$35.00.

Reviewed by **Debbie Vaughn** (Reference Librarian, College of Charleston)
<vaughnd@cofc.edu>

"No furniture so charming as books."
— Sydney Smith

Ned Sherrin's *The Oxford Dictionary of Humorous Quotations* is a must-have for everyone. With nearly 6,000 quotations of wit and wisdom, at least an armful are *guaranteed* to make any reader smile. Academic and public libraries need it for their patrons, and everyone else needs it for their sanity. As **Alan Bennett** aptly stated in *Forty Years On*, "Mark my words, when a society has to resort to the lavatory for its humor, the writing is on the wall."

In his preface to the second edition, **Sherrin** boasts that there are 800+ new quotations and over 30 new themes. He also throws in as many witty passages and time and space allowed before his volume was sent to press. **Sherrin's** commitment to publishing a superlative work of reference is readily apparent. In this second edition, **Sherrin** includes his introduction to the original volume, which was published in 1995. A fine introduction it is. **Sherrin** discusses the difference between wit and humor, richness of unintentional and unconscious humor, and other variations of humor. He defends his selection criteria for inclusion of citations, and presents quotations whose exclusion he mourns.

Unlike the practice in some reference books, **Sherrin** offers a one-page narration of how to use the dictionary. Let it be noted that the dictionary is already quite easy to use; however, this

brief directive is appreciated. The quotations are divided by themes, examples being alcohol, baseball, censorship, critics and criticism, dogs, friends and enemies, heaven and hell, men and women, middle age, politicians, snobbery, taxes, virtue and vice, and youth. See also suggestions for similar themes are given. Within each theme, quotations are presented alphabetically by author, and contextual information is included when relevant. An impressive author index follows, with passages listed according to theme and quotation number within that theme. The book concludes with an in-depth, 125-page keyword index.

Some of my favorite quotes, taken from the pages of **Sherrin's Dictionary**:

"It is a pity that the composer did not leave directions as to how flat he really did want it sung." — George Ade

"I think you're full of skit." — Dorothy Parker

"Love's a disease. But curable." — Rose Macaulay

And, finally:

"I know heaps of quotations, so I can always make quite a fair show of knowledge." — O. Douglas

Add this book to your library's (and your own) collection, so that you, too, can make a fair show of knowledge.

Vivante, Bella. *Events That Changed Ancient Greece*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002. 0313316392. 224 pages. \$45.00

Reviewed by **Michael Litchfield** (Charleston Conference Coordinator)
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This is a highly engaging book. It contains ten chapters, each consisting of a brief four- to five-page introduction and an essay that provides an analysis of major events in ancient Greece in broad, easily understood strokes. The "events" aren't necessarily events, but rather famous episodes, issues, systems of government, and other key occurrences that shaped Hellenic history. **Alexander's** conquests, the Peloponnesian wars and the Persian wars are highlighted. **Vivante** also offers descriptions of the early Mycenaeans, epic poetry, tyranny in Archaic Greece (8th-6th century, BC), Athenian imperialism, Panhellenism, the Olympic games, and the

Hellenistic empires from **Alexander's** death through Kleopatra VII (of Anthony and Cleopatra fame).

Events That Changed Ancient Greece is certainly an introductory work; it compresses roughly three millennia into under three hundred pages, without getting into controversial issues aside from just pointing out that the controversies exist (such as the historical veracity of the events depicted in **Homer's** epics). As an introductory work for secondary schools or entry-level undergraduates it is quite smart. It is also an enjoyable read for those (like me) who read about history and trivia in their spare time.