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From the Reference Desk

Thomas Gilson

College of Charleston, gilsont@cofc.edu

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From the Reference Desk

by Tom Gilson (Head, Reference Services, Robert Scott Small Library, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC 29424; Phone: 843-953-8014; Fax: 843-953-8019) <gilson@cofc.edu>

The *Greenwood Encyclopedia of Daily Life: A Tour through History from Ancient Times to the Present* (2004, 0313325413, \$599.95) focuses on a somewhat neglected, but increasingly important, aspect of history. Everyday, mundane aspects of life are rarely covered in historical encyclopedias and *Greenwood* is to be commended for devoting a full set solely to them.

Foregoing the usual alphabetical arrangement, these six volumes are arranged by broad time periods introduced by a historical overview section and then subdivided into 7 daily life categories. The categories include domestic, economic, intellectual, material, political, recreational and religious. Each category is, in turn, subdivided by related topic and then further divided geographically. For example, in volume one, *The Ancient World*, under the broad category recreational life there are the subcategories Hunting, Sports and Games; Dance Music and Theater; and Holidays, Festivals and Spectacles. These subcategories are further broken down under Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, India, and Australian Aborigines.

Each volume also offers additional features like a chronology of the time period covered and basic maps in the introductory historical overview section of the volume. In addition, the individual volumes have a brief collection of primary source documents relevant to the time period as well as a cumulative index that is helpful. The index is comprehensive and refers readers to the pages in each volume containing information on the subject. The index also includes a legend that reminds the reader which time periods are covered in each volume.

Given its concentration on daily life issues and the fact that it attempts to cover such a broad swath of human history, the *Greenwood Encyclopedia of Daily Life* is a unique reference. It is particularly appropriate for high school students and lower division undergraduates in search of background information. However, it is not intended for in-depth research. While full of interesting facts, the articles are survey type essays. The bibliographies are brief with references to *Greenwood's* own *Daily Life* series of

books throughout and a few references to relevant journal articles. Nonetheless, these six volumes will prove very useful in answering basic questions and for writing short papers and getting started on longer projects. Many public, high school and college libraries will want to add this set to their collections. *Greenwood* has also released an online version. For more information point your browser to <http://www.greenwood.com/dailylife/default.asp>.

Another unique reference work is *Routledge's Encyclopedia of American Folk Art* (2004, 0415929865, \$150). Selected as an ALA-RUSA outstanding reference source for 2004, the *Encyclopedia* is worthy of the acclaim. Produced in association with the American Folk Art Museum and edited by its Director, **Gerard C. Wertkin**, with contributions from 92 specialists in the field, the *Encyclopedia* is grounded in expertise and serious scholarship. Mr. Wertkin's helpful introduction sets the tone blending historical perspective with interesting commentary.

The *Encyclopedia* consists of 607 entries that "address three broad areas: persons, institutions and subjects of topical interest." The biographies cover recognized artists as well as some noted collectors and scholars while the institutional articles discuss influential museums and art societies. The topical coverage ranges from specific art forms like calligraphy and quilting to broader genres like ceramic arts and political folk art thus revealing the fascinating diversity of American folk art. The articles are uniformly well researched and written in a clear and informative style.

Liberally illustrated with black and white photos, the *Encyclopedia* also has 64 color plates in four sections arranged chronologically. Viewing these plates gives the reader a sense of the evolution of American folk art from 18th century gravestone carvings to the illustrations accompanying popular calendars in the 1990's. One possible criticism is the lack of a thematic index enabling the reader to easily see the relationships among articles. However, this is compensated for in large measure by the extensive use of "see also" references after each article and in the general index. The index itself is thorough, well designed, and easy to use with references to specific page and plate numbers. The bibliographies are brief, but useful, and each article is signed. The contributors' list provides credentials as well relevant institutional affiliations.

Naturally a single volume could never cover all questions about a topic as rich and as complex as American folk art. However, the *Encyclopedia of American Folk Art* captures many, if not all, of the significant highlights. Given

the obvious scholarship and quality that went into the production of this reference, there is an added bonus. The price is more than reasonable. A must purchase for any library, academic or public, with an interest in collecting in this area.

The *Encyclopedia of Islam & the Muslim World* (2004, MacMillan, \$296) should find a broad audience. With the current state of world affairs, thoughtful, scholarly reference works on the Islam and the Muslim world are needed by students and lay readers alike. This reference set will be useful to both.

According to editor, **Richard C. Martin's** introduction, over 500 international scholars contributed some 504 articles ranging from brief 200 word entries to 5,000 word articles. **Martin** and his co-editors wanted to create a reference that was "about Islamic cultures, religion, history, politics, and the like as well as the people who have identified with Islam over the past fourteen centuries." In this, they have succeeded. There are numerous biographical sketches of important figures and articles on a diversity of topics ranging from calligraphy to clothing, harems to heresy, the caliphate to capitalism and the Intifada to the Internet. There are articles on specific religious beliefs and institutions, geographical regions and countries, historic periods and dynasties, organizations and movements as well as articles on the relationships of Islam to other world religions. Solid production values are employed throughout. Some 170 photos, maps, charts, and illustrations enhance these two volumes. There is a Synoptic Outline of Entries that offers an "overview of the conceptual structure of the *Encyclopedia*" and a useful, general index along with a timeline and a glossary. Bibliographies whose length relates to the importance of the topic are included for each article and there are "see also" references to related entries. The writing is unadorned and to the point with unfamiliar Islamic terms romanized, and where needed, defined and identified.

Larger public libraries as well as academic libraries will welcome the *Encyclopedia of Islam & the Muslim World*. It can stand on its own, and given its broader historical coverage and its accessible, but scholarly articles, the *Encyclopedia* can serve to complement the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* (1995, 0195148037, \$150, four volumes in paperback) which covers the 18th through the 20th centuries. Academic collections serious about Islamic studies should also be aware of the "new" edition of **Brill's Encyclopedia of Islam**. Begun in 1987, the print set will be complete with the upcoming publication of volume 12. The *Encyclopedia of Islam* is also available online as a subscription database. For further information check out: http://www.brill.nl/m_catalogue_sub1.htm.

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Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

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

Column Editor's Note: Art is to museums as books are to libraries. This analogy could easily come from a standardized test, and, upon first glance, could be considered accurate. There is, however, a wonderful symbiotic relationship between libraries and museums that blurs the definition established in the abovementioned analogy. Our cataloging systems are different and our collections are comprised of diverse media, but visual representations and art are

just as meaningful to human civilization as words and books.

This month, **Monographic Musings** takes a look at three books that further merge the spheres of fine art and libraries. The new edition of **The Oxford Dictionary of Art** defines elements of art in our culture; **The Atlas of World Art** amalgamates geography, art, and society; and **The Twenty-First Century Art Librarian** presents six articles to help fine-tune art librarianship. Happy reading, everyone! —DV

The Oxford Dictionary of Art, 3rd ed. **Chilvers, Ian**, ed. New York: Oxford UP, 2004. 0198604769. 864 pages. \$45.00.

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

With the first edition published in 1988 and a subsequent edition in 1997, **The Oxford Dictionary of Art** is an authoritative reference volume that covers art from classical Greece to works created by artists born in or before 1965. Editor **Ian Chilvers** quotes the original editor, **Dr. Dennis Far**, in the preface, claiming that the dictionary "is meant for the layman who needs reliable information in an easily accessible form; it is also designed to be a handy reference book for students and teachers."

The **Dictionary of Art** begins with a classified list of entries arranged by thematic art headings: Ancient and Medieval, Artist Biographies, Other Biographies (such as writers, patrons, and dealers), and Non-Biographical Entries

(such as museums and galleries, academies, movements, and techniques). Entries are arranged alphabetically, "see" references are offered, and "see also" cross-references are preceded by an asterisk. Following the main entries is a chronology of key works and other events—beginning c. 5000 BC and ending in 2003—that has, like most of the book, been expanded since the second edition. **Chilvers'** work concludes with a handy index of galleries and museums.

As dictionaries go, the **Dictionary of Art** is an engaging one. I would not be surprised if researchers seeking one entry read the next few entries out of sheer intellectual curiosity. **Chilvers'** voice is attention-grabbing, and he includes trivia in his entries that,

while brief and anti-cumbersome, leave the reader with a solid overview of his/her original query. If your library is seeking an updated art reference book and illustrations are not of prime importance, the

Dictionary of Art could even possibly provide a cost-friendly alternative to a multi-volume art encyclopedia. This impressive work is suitable for academic, public, and high school libraries.

Atlas of World Art. **Onians, John**, ed. New York: Oxford UP, 2004. 0195215834. 352 pages. \$150.00.

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

The Atlas of World Art, edited by **John Onians**, is a fascinating hybrid of historical atlas, art history text, and geography lesson, with the slightest dash of hip travel guide. **Onians**, professor of visual arts and director of the **World Art Research Programme** at the **University of East Anglia**, has written two other books on art in the classical world, and the periodical **Art History** bears his name as founding editor.

The Atlas of World Art is divided into seven major parts, each based on time period and influences on artistic evolution; each section is then broken down by region. After an overview written by **Onians**, the sections immediately jump into information about regional artistic movements. More than 60 scholars contributed to the narratives that complement the maps, illustrations, and photographs that fill the volume. The book includes a bibliography and thorough 28-page index.

Onians' atlas contains a great deal more text than traditional atlases, text which emphasizes the

relationships conveyed in the book's visual components. However, being the visual learner that I am, I believe it is the clear maps, stunning illustrations, beautiful photographs, and overall comprehensible graphic design that make this book the gem that it is. Cheers to cartographic editor **Ailsa Heritage** for insuring that the maps succinctly convey the complex relationship among geography, history, society, technology, and, of course, art.

The Atlas of World Art is just as suitable for an academic or public library as it is for your own coffee table. It is a beautiful work of art itself, packed with images of art and architecture, and I would be proud to display it in my home. At the same time, it offers an innovative way for researchers and students to look at the world's art from 40,000 BC to Y2K. The aforementioned components of civilization—geography, history, society, technology, and art—are relevant to a scholar and a layperson alike. If you can fit it into your budget, it is well worth the high price tag.

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The **H. W. Wilson Company** has just published the 12th edition of a standard tool for public library collection development and readers' advisory work. The **Public Library Catalog** (2004, 0824209818, \$350) has guided reference librarians and their patrons to quality reference and adult non-fiction books for years. Although it traces its origins to the first installment of the **Standard Catalog - Sociology Section** in 1918, the first full edition was published in 1934 as the **Standard Catalog for Public Libraries**. Later changing its name to the **Public Library Cata-**

log, this work lists English language nonfiction books published in the United States, or published in Canada and the UK but distributed in this country. It is restricted to printed books. Non-print materials are not included, nor are "works that quickly become dated such as computer software guides."

The current edition provides bibliographic information for each of the 8,000 entries, including author, title, publishers, number of pages, price, ISBN as well as excerpts of reviews from publications like **Library Journal** and **Publishers Weekly**. The **Catalog** is divided into two main parts. The first is called the **Classified Catalog** and is arranged by the **Dewey Decimal Classification** number. Within each classification number, titles are arranged alphabetically by author name.

There is an extensive Author, Title, Subject and Analytical Index that refers to the classification number in which the books can be found in the **Classified Catalog**.

Browsing the **Public Library Catalog** reinforces the notion that even in the age of computer access an extensive selective bibliography has a useful role. It is a handy, easy to use tool that librarians will find helpful in selecting titles to bolster their collections as well as making recommendations to their readers on numerous topics of interest.

The list price includes the basic 2004 volume along with a subscription to receive three annual supplements from 2005 to 2007. The **Public Library Catalog** is a necessary purchase for most medium to large public libraries.