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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>

Routledge's *Encyclopedia of the Arctic* (2005, 1579584365, \$525) offers unique coverage of an important region of the world, increasingly in the news. It provides the reader with a comprehensive treatment of the Arctic ranging from articles on climate and weather to those on international politics, and from entries discussing native peoples to those on specific Arctic flora and fauna. There are also articles on geographic locations, various aspects of oceanography, early exploration, science and individual scientists, as well as those on national parks and influential organizations. The treatment is thorough and topics are explored from a variety of perspectives. For example, there is an article that discusses the three species of bear found in the Arctic, one that discusses the role of bears in native ritual and ceremonies and an essay on the 1981 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears.

In all, there are more than 1200 entries in three-volumes written by an international cast of 375 scholars and specialists. These are impressive numbers and editor, **Mark Nuttall**, puts them all together to create an equally impressive work. The articles are scholarly and academic but will engage the interested lay reader. There is a useful thematic list of entries and a solid, if imperfect, general index. (There are references to page numbers but not volume numbers and no key is provided listing the page numbers within each volume.)

Students and researchers will be hard pressed to find a more thorough and comprehensive reference work on this region of the world. In fact, there is nothing else quite like it. Focused on the Arctic and far more exhaustive than **Firefly Books'** single volume *Antarctica and the Arctic: the Complete Encyclopedia* (2001, 1552975452, \$60), this work is a definite purchase for both academic and larger public libraries.

As computers play an increasingly essential part in our lives, the study of human computer interaction has developed into a full-blown discipline. In fact, typing in the **Google** search,

"human computer interaction"

tion" "graduate programs," results in about 10,600 hits. However, human computer interaction is a dynamic, interdisciplinary area of study, and for many, it is ill defined. The **Berkshire Encyclopedia of Human-Computer Interaction** (2004, 0974309125, \$295) should help remedy that situation for many readers.

Editor **William Sims Bainbridge** of the **National Science Foundation** recruited some 175 contributors to write the 200 articles in this encyclopedia. They are a diverse group and include computer scientists, engineers, social and behavioral scientists and other scholars. While the technology is well represented in the topic selection, the number of other subjects covered attests to the interdisciplinary nature of the field. Besides the technical entries there are issue-oriented essays on topics like privacy, children and the Web, information filtering, and security, as well as entries for important, practical applications like online voting, telecommuting, digital libraries and E-business. More broadly, there are also articles that explore the relationship between human computer interaction and disciplines like political science, anthropology, psychology and the law. Regarding the technical articles, they can be fairly specific ranging from coverage of interfaces like pen and stylus input to discussions of components like liquid crystal displays and methods like speech recognition. After examining the entries in this encyclopedia, the reader is struck by the elements of human computer interaction that are woven into the fabric of everyday life. Besides the topics already mentioned there are articles on chat rooms, email, spell checkers, and computer games that discuss applications used by millions of people everyday.

However, as good as this encyclopedia is, there are some inconsistencies in the index. Looking for information on copyright issues, the index refers the reader to pages 417-419 in volume two. The information is on those pages, but in volume one. In addition, the terms sex and pornography do not appear in the index although there is an article on cybersex. "See" references from such related terms would be helpful. The article on cybersex is well written and objective, but is made difficult to find using the index, unless one is looking specifically for the term cybersex.

Given the ground breaking nature of this title, such oversights are minor and can be remedied in any future editions.

Works like the **Berkshire Encyclopedia of Human-Computer Interaction** play a valuable role in lending definition to emerging, interdisciplinary fields of study. The articles are scholarly and informed, while at the same time, accessible. Visually attractive production values and added features like a glossary, a master bibliography and an appendix listing novels,

movies, etc. that reflect popular culture's fascination with human computer interaction serve to enhance the set. With interest in this field predicted to grow, both public and academic libraries will want to give this encyclopedia serious consideration.

Scholars and students of **King Arthur** and the Arthurian legend will be thrilled by a recent title published by **Oxford University Press**. **Arthurian Annals: The Tradition in English from 1250 to 2000** (2004, 198607253, \$450) is an exhaustive 11,000 citation bibliography. This is an impressive accomplishment in itself, but even more so in that all the citations are annotated.

Resulting from a 20 year labor of love, this bibliography traces publications and creative works related to the Arthurian legend from its medieval beginnings through our continuing fascination with **Arthur**. As editors **Daniel P. Nastali** and **Phillip C. Boardman** note in their introduction, the scope of coverage includes works that deal with "the central story of **Arthur** and the figures associated with him," the "related traditions of the Holy Grail and Tristan and Iseult," and "the development over time of Arthurian themes and characters." In addition, works dealing with "the persons and events of post-Roman Britain," (the time attributed to **Arthur**) and places associated with the legend are included. Formats and genres covered comprise books, films, sound recordings, television programs, periodical articles, poetry, novels, non fiction, folklore and children's literature. **Arthurian Annals** consists of two volumes. The first is the bibliography which is chronologically arranged and contains full citations and descriptive information for each entry. The second volume is the index which provides separate indexes by people, title, forms and genres, characters, cultures, places, source language and themes and motifs.

Arthurian Annals is a scholar's delight. It builds on, but is more comprehensive than earlier efforts like the four-volume **Arthurian bibliography** series published by **D.S. Brewer** in 1981, 1983, 1998 and 2002 successively, and **Edmund Reiss' Arthurian Legend and Literature: An Annotated Bibliography: Renaissance to the Present** (1995, 0824091221, limited availability via **Amazon**). The **Arthurian Annals** will also make a noteworthy companion on the shelf to other standard reference works like **Garland's Arthurian Name Dictionary** (1999, 0815328656, \$160) and their **New Arthurian Encyclopedia** (1996, 1568654324, \$14.60 and up from **Amazon**). Academic libraries supporting upper division English literature classes will find it a natural fit for their collections. Arthurian scholars will find it essential.

The **W.H. Auden Encyclopedia** (2004, 078641443X, \$65) is a handy one-volume ref-

continued on page 50

From the Reference Desk
from page 48

erence that will appeal to interested readers as well as serious scholars. Written by **David Garrett Izzo** and published by **McFarland** this book offers easy access to details about **Auden's** life, his influences, his ideas and his literary accomplishments.

Perhaps best known for his poetry, the *Encyclopedia* makes it clear that Auden was also an accomplished librettist, playwright and essayist. At the forefront of the so-called "Auden Generation" he was identified with writers like **Christopher Isherwood** and **Stephen Spender**, writers whose impact on 20th century letters is also chronicled in this volume. Of course, there are biographical sketches of other contemporary writers and thinkers who occupied Auden's world. Entries range from **Joyce** and **Eliot** to **Maugham** and **Housman** and from **Freud** and **Jung** to **Kierkegaard** and **Gerald Heard**. There is also coverage of influences like **William Blake**, **Goethe** and **Voltaire**, as well as people who figured prominently in Auden's personal life like **Chester Kallman**. In addition, there are essays that discuss Auden's ideas regarding Christianity, mysticism, history and Old Norse and Old English literature, as well as numerous entries covering Auden's individual works.

Additional features include black and white

photos illustrating the text, a chronology of Auden's life and a bibliography of Auden's works, as well as one of selected biographies and criticisms. Although the entries are arranged alphabetically there is also a useful general index. Unfortunately there is no thematic index and a surprising lack of "see also" references.

Author **David Garrett Izzo** has accomplished his mission. Students will find the *W.H. Auden Encyclopedia* a thorough introduction to his life and work while scholars and admirers will find it a resource well deserving of repeated visits. It is one of those books that should find its way into circulating collections as easily as reference collections.

From evidence in prehistoric settlements to the latest in cookware and modern appliances, the kitchen has been an essential part of domestic life. With the *Encyclopedia of Kitchen History* (2004, 1579583806, \$175), **Fitzroy Dearborn** and veteran reference book writer **Mary Ellen Snodgrass** offer a work that provides interesting historical perspectives on one of the most popular parts of anyone's home.

In a straightforward alphabetical arrangement of more than 300 articles this book covers a variety of topics from the development of kitchen storage devices like cabinets, cupboards and canisters to various cooking styles from barbecue to frying to stone boiling. There are also articles on the history of staple

foods like honey, rice, bananas, coconut, breads, nuts, spices, oil and wine. Various cookware innovations like mixers and blenders, pyrex, and Teflon coating are also included as are biographical sketches of famous cooks like **Julia Child** and **Charles Beard** and food processing innovators like **Clarence Birdseye** and the **Kellogg** brothers.

Snodgrass seems to concentrate on the history of the European and American kitchen. Although they are referenced in a number of entries, one wishes that there was more direct coverage of other cultures. While there are articles on American Colonial Kitchens and Victorian Kitchens there are no articles on African or Mideast kitchens. On the plus side, the book is attractive and uses black and white photos and images to complement the text and each article has a brief list of further reading. There is also a serviceable general index and useful "see also" references. However, there is no topical index or guide.

Despite the reservations noted above, *Encyclopedia of Kitchen History* should have appeal, especially to public libraries. For larger reference collections it would supplement **Scribner's** recent **Dartmouth Medal** winner, *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture* (2004, 0684805685, \$400) as well other standard sources like the *O* (1999 0192115790, \$65) and the *Co Ho* (0521402166, \$210). (These last two titles can be purchased together from **Amazon** at significant savings.)

Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

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

Column Editor's Note: *The natural environment and a library's online environment are in different spheres; however reviewer **Burton Callicott** and I take a look at books detailing these separate fields in this month's column. Happy reading, everyone! — DV*

Williams, Michael. *Deforesting the Earth: From Prehistory to Global Crisis*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003.
0226899268. 715 pages. \$70.00.

Reviewed by **Burton Callicott** (Reference Librarian,
College of Charleston) <callicottb@cofc.edu>

Being rather masochistic when it comes to environmental issues, my eyes naturally settled on **Michael Williams's** *Deforesting the Earth: from Prehistory to Global Crisis* in the pile of *ATG* review books in my editor's office. Though I have long since accepted the idea of an impending environmental apocalypse, I continue to embattle my fragile psyche with more and more information in support of a doomsday scenario. With substantial evidence of increased global warming and ever increasing species extinction, it is not hard to find such support. Expecting to tuck into a heaping helping of staggering and depressing facts relating to our quickly deteriorating forests, mixed with a good diatribe on the coming end of the world as we know it, I was surprised to uncover a more complicated and sober account of human interaction with the forest beginning with the retreat of the last ice age to the 1990s. Rather than simply outline the ways that white Western men have destroyed the earth's fragile ecosystem in increasingly industrious and insidious ways, this book takes

a more protracted and encompassing approach. Using pollen counts, soil samples, and loads of documentation, Williams outlines the ways that humans have had a profound effect on forests since "the dawn of time." Being a white Western man myself, I was somehow relieved and took strange comfort when I read that in AD 900 Maoris destroyed almost half of the forests in New Zealand in an effort to hunt the Moa, "a large, ostrichlike, flightless bird." "The mixed broadleaf-conifer forests [of New Zealand] (dominant species, *Nothofagus* and *Podocarpus* varieties) were completely destroyed," Williams writes. "By the mid-thirteenth century a mere 8,000-12,000 people in South Island had destroyed not less than 8 million acres of forest and driven the Moa to the verge of extinction." Though providing no hope in terms of the Earth's future, knowing that our current crisis is not solely the fault of my tribe assuages my inherited guilt to some degree.

Like most people, I grew up with the myth propagated by **Thoreau** and others that when Europeans landed in "The New World" they confronted a "virgin" landscape untouched by human hands and that the people that were inhabiting the country were living in perfect harmony with nature. This book deftly shatters this myth. Though Native Americans did not have chain saws or even metal axes, they did have a profound impact on the land and the size, shape, and type of forests in the Americas as did native peoples in every continent: "When the Europeans came to North America, the forest had already been changed radically. Their coming did not alter the processes at work [clearing forests for farmland]; it was merely their superior numbers and advanced technology that accomplished that."

continued on page 51