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From the Reference Desk

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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) <gilsont@cofc.edu>

The *Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America* (2004, 0195154371, \$250) is one of those sets that readers love to browse. But that is not the only attraction. This encyclopedia is full of information about a topic most everyone finds fascinating and is presented with authority and skill by experts in culinary art and history. Some 770 articles along with 350 illustrations are packed in these two volumes portraying food and drink as both an influence, and a reflection, of American culture and history.

Topic coverage is diverse ranging from candy bars to celebrity chefs, frontier cooking to fast food, Karo syrup to kitchen gardening and Tupperware to tailgate picnics. The richness of American cuisine is exemplified by articles on ethnic and cultural food from Cajun and Creole to Caribbean and Native American influences, as well as entries on specific cuisines like Mexican, Chinese, Polish, Italian and African American. Historical context is important in this set and is provided in a series of ar-

ticles under the broad heading Historical Overview. These articles break down chronologically from the Colonial period and the Revolution, through the Civil War and the Victorian era, and from the early 1900's through World War II up to the present. In addition, there are numerous entries on food staples, drinks and beverages, food preparation, meal and eating customs, cookbooks and food writing, regional foods, health concerns and of course, biographies of important figures.

The *Encyclopedia* has a number of value added touches that readers have come to expect from quality sources including a topical outline of entries, bibliographies, "see also" references, a list of contributors with their credentials and a comprehensive index. The set also includes a list of food Websites, major library collections, and food related museums and organizations. All of this is guided with scholarly care by editor, **Andrew F. Smith** who teaches at the **New School University** in New York and is author of a number of food-related titles.

With its emphasis on American cuisine the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America* compliments rather than competes with **Scribner's** much praised *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture* (2004, 0684805685, \$420).

It is an obvious choice for most academic and larger public libraries.

Fitzroy Dearborn has published a reference work that in many ways breaks new ground. Focusing on the entire continent, the *Encyclopedia of African History* (2005, 1579582451, \$495) is a work of scholarship that incorporates contemporary perspectives and confirms the significance and complexity of this rich

history. This is an African history not filtered through the European experience. There are almost 1100 articles written by 330 international scholars (40% of which are Africans) within these 3 volumes. Typical entry lengths are in the neighborhood of 1000 words but there are a number of articles that run 3000-5000 words that offer regional discussions and treat wider topics of interest.

Naturally, there are articles discussing each of the modern nation states in Africa, many of which are thorough, multi-part entries. There are also articles on Pan African topics ranging from art and architecture to political systems, and from the history of religions to community in African society. Added to this are entries on regional history, significant individuals, various aspects of imperialism and colonialism, articles on Stone Age and Iron Age cultures, as well as those on 19th and 20th century developments.

Editor, **Kevin Shillington** and his contributors are to be commended. They have covered an impressive range of topics with scholarly and fact rich articles that will be appreciated by both scholars and students. Their encyclopedia is intended for a far more academic audience than **Facts on File's** *Encyclopedia of African History and Culture* (2005, 0816051992, \$425). **Shillington's** work also has its full emphasis on African history unlike **Oxford's** well received *Africana: the Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*. Given these factors, this *Encyclopedia of African History* is unique, and is a definite purchase for college and university libraries supporting courses in African history.

(P.S. The 2nd edition of *Africana: the Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience* is due in April 2005 and lists at \$500 with a prepublication offer at \$425. The ISBN is 0195170555.)

Public relations is not often thought of as an academic discipline. Compounding this lack of recognition, there is still debate within the field as to definition and scope. **Robert L Heath**, editor of **Sage Publications' Encyclopedia of Public Relations** (2005, 0761927336, \$295) hopes to help change that. In fact, "one of the goals of this book is to make the practice of public relations more adequately understood by an array of readers."

This is not easy given some of the negative connotations associated with public relations. However, **Heath** and his contributors are up to the task.

There are nearly 450 entries in this two volume set that shed light on a variety of topics. A fair number of articles help lay a historical framework discussing the role of public relations in seminal events like the **Colorado Coal Strike** in 1913 and the **Exxon - Valdez** crisis, as well as offering biographical sketches of fig-

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books for possible inclusion into our collections each year. Before our analytical cataloging project, we might have added many "books" in our catalog even though we had them already as journal issues in the past. We probably will still let a few slips through, but we have not added a second copy for these "books" which have analytical cataloging records in the library catalog. We are more tuned to looking at a gift title and wondering if it is really a jointly issued book.

Finally, within the book world of libraries, there is growing sense that fulltext databases with fulltext serial articles are becoming the first and only choice for information for researchers. While books may have excellent material,

researchers look to the fulltext serials as more convenient, better indexed, and more current than our book collection. We wonder if a growing quality difference between book cataloging and journal indexing (a fuller form of cataloging) is contributing to the reduced use of the book collection. Perhaps our small effort to add value back to the "book" catalog will increase the book collection's usefulness to potential users. There is always a tradeoff between better cataloging of what you already own and the needed cataloging for new materials, new formats, serials in fulltext, Websites, and even digital libraries. Perhaps we need to keep looking for ways to enhance the quantity and quality of book cataloging if we want to increase the access to books and promote the intellectual content in books in which we have so heavily invested. 🐾

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ures ranging from **P.T. Barnum** to **Edward Bernays** and from **Roger Ailes** to **Isobel Parke**. Numerous public relations concepts and terms are also covered. There are articles that treat subjects like validity, reliability and openness, as well as those that discuss spin, doublespeak, de-positioning and sound bites. In addition, there are entries on the theoretical underpinnings of public relations. Such articles cover theories like co-orientation, fantasy theme analysis, intercultural communication, perspectivism and semiotics. And while public relations is largely an American invention, international coverage is offered with entries on PR practice in individual countries like South Africa, Canada and the UK, and more broadly in Asia, Africa and Europe. The set is well produced and rich in added features. Besides an alphabetical list of entries, topical and general indexes, bibliographies, and cross-references, there are nine appendices. Two of these reprint the codes of ethics of the **Public Relations Society of America** and the **International Association of Business Communicators**. Other appendices include a chronology, a dictionary of public relations measurement terms, and lists of online resources and college and universities offering "substantial" programs in public relations. There is also a discussion of the evolution of the corporate annual report as a mainstay of business public relations.

The essential role that public relations plays in forging opinions in business, politics and other facets of our lives comes through as one examines these two volumes. An academic reference work that discusses the topic in a serious and professional way was needed. The *Encyclopedia of Public Relations* goes a long way toward meeting that need. It will be a natural candidate for academic libraries supporting communications and business programs.

Technology has brought momentous change during the last century. A new encyclopedia published by **Routledge's** places that change in light of its impacts on "people and their experiences with technology." The *Encyclopedia of 20th Century Technology* (2005, 1579583865, \$325) traces turn of the century technologies like the internal combustion engine through today's computer driven world and discusses technology's role in entertainment, medicine, construction, the environment, communication, transportation and warfare. It is a staggering history of incredible change.

The focus is on technology. There are no biographical sketches of pioneer inventors. Articles treating topics as varied as cryogenics, fax machines, dishwashers, and semiconductors offer descriptions of the technology, as well as tackle their historic development. But, there are also articles that offer thematic overviews on subjects like biotechnology, energy and power, agriculture and food, telecommunications, and technology and ethics. Intended for the lay reader as well as students, the writing attempts to be free of jargon and overly technical terms.

Each entry has a bibliography, many of which are more substantial than the norm for a two volume set. A thematic list of entries gives the reader a good sense of the content and a general index provides access to specifics. One minor complaint, the index lists only page numbers and does not differentiate between the two volumes. Although this seems to be a standard practice among some publishers, use of **bold** volume numbers or a page key would be useful.

Encyclopedia of 20th Century Technology will be a welcome addition to academic library collections supporting classes on the history of science and technology. It offers scholarly treatments that explain the technology of our modern world in a clear and understandable way.

The focus is specifically on technological development in the industrial United States and Europe. Those libraries interested in science and technology outside the West should also consider **Kluwer's** *Encyclopaedia of the History of Science, Technology and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures* (1997, 0792340663, \$522).

A couple of updated titles have come across my desk that are deserving of mention.

Libraries needing the most recent information about hazardous substances will be glad that **Wiley** has released the 11th edition of **Sax's** *Dangerous Properties of Industrial Materials* (2004, 0471476625, \$595). Since the 1950's **Sax's** has provided information about hazardous materials from food additives to pesticides and from preservatives to plastics. This edition adds more than 2,597 new entries to those listed in the 10th edition (1999), as well as updating many more. Each entry has an individual entry code and provides the substance name, hazard rating, **Chemical Abstract Service (CAS)** registry number, the **DOT** code assigned by the **U.S. Department of Transportation**, the molecular formula and weight, structural formula, properties, a list of synonyms, toxicity data, consensus reports, standards and recommendations, safety profile and references to **OSHA** and **NIOSH** occupational analytical methods. Author **Richard J. Lewis** provides a thorough

and comprehensive introduction that explains the structure of the entries and their relevant content. The first two volumes of this three-volume set contain the substance entries while the third is a collection of cross-indexes including those by **DOT** guide number, by **CAS** registry number and possibly the most useful, by synonym. The third volume also has a toxicological bibliography of the 2250 sources referenced in the first two volumes. Special and academic libraries that have found **Sax's** *Dangerous Properties of Industrial Materials* useful will want to give serious consideration to this new edition. By the way it is also available in CD-ROM in both single user and networked versions. Point your browser to <http://www.vonl.com/chips/cdroms.htm> for details.

Business librarians will be interested to learn that **Grey House** has published a 12th edition of the *Directory of Business Information Resources* (2004, 1592370500, \$195). Edited by **Richard Gottlieb**, this oversized paperback lists resources covering 98 industries from automotive, trucking and industrial equipment to broadcasting, insurance, and legal services. Within each of the 98 industries are lists of trade and professional associations, newsletters, magazines and journals, directories, databases, trades shows, Websites and international contacts. Entries include addresses, phone and fax numbers, Websites, key executives, and brief descriptions. In addition, for associations the number of members is listed and for publications, frequency, circulation and subscription price are included. While subject access is provided via the table of contents listing the 98 industries, there are also indexes by alphabetical entry and publisher name, as well as a magazine special issues index. Although hundreds of new associations have been added to this edition, by necessity much of the information is redundant. Libraries that have the 2003/04 edition may want to hold off on spending the \$195 asking price. However, for those who have not purchased the *Directory* in a while, this is a worthwhile purchase. (It is also available as an online database with subscriptions at \$495.)

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Darwin's theory of evolution. The insights of **Crick**, and his collaborator, **James D. Watson**, into the structure of DNA and into the genetic code made possible a new understanding of heredity at the molecular level. This latest collection on **Profiles in Science** represents a close collaboration between the **National Library of Medicine** and the **Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine** in London, which holds the **Crick** papers. The **Crick** collection brings to 14 the number of notable researchers and public health officials whose personal and professional records are featured

on **Profiles**. The site is located at www.profiles.nlm.nih.gov.
http://www.nlm.nih.gov/news/press_releases/profiles_crick05.html

The **College Libraries Section of ACRL** developed one of the first electronic discussion lists, **COLLIB-L**, more than a decade ago. Since then, it has moved twice and developed a subscriber base of more than 1,000. **COLLIB-L** features lively discussions of a wide range of professional issues. Consider subscribing. Send the following message (nothing in the Subject line and no signature, please) — subscribe collib-l your name to <listproc@ala.org>.

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