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From the Reference Desk-Reviews of Reference Titles

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From the Reference Desk

by **Tom Gilson** (Head, Reference Services, Addlestone Library, College of Charleston, 66 George Street, Charleston, SC 29401; Phone: 843-953-8014; Fax: 843-953-8019) <gilson@cofc.edu>

Since its purchase by **SAGE, CQ Press** appears to be expanding its horizons. Previously a publisher specializing in works focused on American government and politics, **CQ Press** just released the *Encyclopedia of Religion in America* (2010, 978-0-87289-580-5, \$495.) This four-volume set serves to update and enhance an encyclopedia entitled the *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience* published by **Scribner** in 1988. Obviously a lot has changed since then.

Edited by respected scholars **Charles H. Lippy** and **Peter W. Williams**, who are also responsible for the *Encyclopedia of the American Religious Experience*, this set reflects devel-



opments ranging from the ordination of an openly gay Episcopal bishop to the growth of the religious right as a political force, and from religious concerns for environmental stewardship to the impact of the Internet and the Electronic Church. The staggering variety of American religions and religious experience are also mirrored here. Not only are major religions like Judaism, Islam, Catholicism, and the mainstream Protestant denominations covered in depth. There are numerous articles that treat religions of Asian origin like Baha'i, Jainism, and Krishna Consciousness as well as essays that deal with new and non-traditional movements like neo-paganism, New Age, Scientology, and the Occult. Specific entries also discuss African-American, Native American, and Latino/a religious traditions. In addition, there are articles that focus on the interplay between religion and cultural factors like politics, the media, visual arts, literature, the sciences and racial prejudice. Although the major emphasis is on the U.S., the *Encyclopedia* also provides articles on religions in Canada, the Caribbean, and Mexico.

The articles are scholarly and substantial, providing historical backdrop as well as the current state of the topics covered. Although

intended for an academic audience, the articles in this set will also be useful to informed lay readers. Each entry has "see also" references and a bibliography leading readers to quality books, journal articles, and Websites. Beside the comprehensive index reprinted in each volume, access to articles is enhanced by a complete alphabetical list of entries as well as a helpful thematic table of contents.

The more one examines the *Encyclopedia of Religion in America*, the more one is impressed with its diverse coverage and treatment of individual topics. It is more comprehensive than **ABC-CLIO's** *Religion and American Cultures: An Encyclopedia of Traditions, Diversity, and Popular Expressions* (2003, 1-57607-238-X, \$285) and more academic than **Facts on File's** *Encyclopedia of American Religious History* (2009, 978-0-8160-6660-5, \$285). Naturally, it is also more expensive. Regardless, it is worthy of serious consideration by most academic libraries. (It is also available online. Price and other information can be requested from the publisher at <http://www.cqpress.com/PriceRequest.asp?>)

Those interested in this title might also consider **Indiana University Press'** award-

continued on page 50

winning *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America* as a more focused complement (2006, 978-0253346858, \$250).

Scholars and serious students will welcome **ABC-CLIO's *A History of the U.S. Political System: Ideas, Interests and Institutions*** (2010, 978-1851097135, \$295). It is a three-volume set that forgoes the use of the usual alphabetical arrangement for a topical grouping within the first two volumes and a collection of relevant documents in the third. The first volume centers on the founding concepts like Federalism and the relationship of Church and State as well as institutions like the presidency, the Congress, and contemporary bureaucracy. The second volume examines the development of specifics like political parties, elections, interest groups, social movements, the media, domestic and foreign policy, and the policy process itself. Volume three consists of important documents and primary sources organized by era from the early republic through the second Bush Administration.

Attention to scholarship is evident throughout. The entries are well researched, thoughtful, and thorough essays rather than the more specific and briefer articles found in many reference works. There is also a focus on primary source material which enhances the academic value of the set. In addition to the documents that make up the third volume, relevant documents are also provided at the end of each section in the first two volumes. Edited by respected scholars **Richard A. Harris** and **Daniel J. Tichenor**, more than 50 historians and political scientists contributed their insights and observations. Each essay is accompanied by helpful references and notes, and each volume has its own index. Oddly there is no cumulative index which impedes the use of this set as reference to mine individual facts.

Given its arrangement and lack of an overall index, *A History of the U.S. Political System* is perhaps more appropriate for circulating collections rather than reference. It is not the type of work that encourages the specific finding of facts or the gathering of brief background information. In order to gain full value from this work requires time and effort, both examining the layout of the set as well as in reading the individual essays. Of course this in no way diminishes its value to scholars. However, these volumes may be of most use in circulating collections where readers are given the opportunity to examine them at home. Libraries wanting this set as a reference may want to consider purchasing the electronic version where keyword searching would more readily allow finding specifics and the printing of brief passages. In any case, the overall quality of scholarship found in this set makes it a valuable purchase for most academic libraries. (For pricing information about the electronic version call 800-368-6868 or email <CustomerService@abc-clio.com>.

Broadway: an Encyclopedia of Theater and American Culture (2010, 978-0313342646, \$180) is a two-volume set that seeks to portray the cultural impact of this iconic center of American theater. Published by **Greenwood Press** and edited by **Thomas Greenfield**, this set combines entries on important theatrical personalities and institutions, landmark productions, and thematic essays. In all, there are over 60 scholars contributing nearly 200 articles in these two volumes.

As one might expect, articles on the people, institutions, and productions that made **Broadway** famous account for most of the entries in this *Encyclopedia*. Actors and actresses ranging from **Paul Robeson** to **Carol Channing**, directors from **Jose Quintero** to **Harold Prince**, and composers and lyricists from **George and Ira Gershwin** to **Rodgers and Hammerstein** fill the pages of these two volumes. There are also articles about influential choreographers and dancers, producers, playwrights, and theater owners. Famous landmark productions like the **Ziegfeld Follies**, **Long Day's Journey into Night**, **Our Town**, **Porgy and Bess**, **My Fair Lady**, **Oh! Calcutta!**, and **Cats** are included as are influential organizations and institutions like the **Federal Theater Project**, the **Provincetown Players**, and the **Theatre Guild**. These articles are full of facts and details as well as achievements and impacts. But the most unique and

thought-provoking articles are those dealing with broader themes. There are entries that discuss the thorny issues of ethnicity, gender, and identity as well as those that treat the relationship between **Broadway** and other art forms from Comic Books to Vaudeville. In addition, there are articles that point to the impact of **Broadway** on regional theater, tourism, and theater education and performance in American high schools.

Scholarly productions values are obvious. Each entry has its own list of further readings, and there is a general bibliography and list of online sources at the end of volume two. Other value-added features include a list of **Broadway** theaters and an accompanying map, a helpful introduction, a timeline, a topical guide, a brief glossary, a list of contributors and their affiliations, and a general index.

Broadway: an Encyclopedia of Theater and American Culture is a definite starting place for anyone interested in exploring the significance of **Broadway** in American theater history and its impact on our broader culture. While the *Encyclopedia* makes no claim to be comprehensive, it provides readers with essential information as well as food for thought in a highly accessible and readable style. This set will be useful to a wide audience including lay readers, high school students, and undergraduates. Depending on individual library need, it is worthy of consideration for either circulating or reference collections. 🐼

Book Reviews — Monographic Musings

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

Column Editor's Note: *I always thoroughly enjoy the Reference Publishing Issue of ATG, as it serves as a friendly reminder of the myriad of ways that different departments of a library influence one another and work together. Take, for instance, the topics covered in this issue's review books: core collections for public libraries, readers' advisory, and paying for library school. It is easy to understand how readers' advisory integrates with reference service; but the other subjects share a mutually-beneficial relationship with reference and reference publishing as well. Acquisitions and collection development are the foundation of a library; without them, reference would have nothing on which to base public service. Likewise, new librarians*

must continue to be minted, and research and scholarship must persist in order for libraries to continue to meet the needs of our information-rich society. Reference, acquisitions, library professionals, friends, publishers, vendors — it takes a village to raise a solid library.

*Many thanks to returning reviewer **Joey van Arnhem** for contributing her thoughts to this issue, and a hearty welcome to MM-newcomer **Patrick Valentine**. **Patrick** is a professor in the Department of Library Science at **East Carolina University**, where he has published and presented on a plethora of topics including multilingual information literacy and school library collections.*

Happy reading, everyone! — DV

Alabaster, Carol. *Developing an Outstanding Core Collection*. 2nd ed. Chicago: ALA, 2010. 978-0838910405. 200 pages. \$60.00.

Reviewed by **Patrick M. Valentine** (Department of Library Science, East Carolina University)

continued on page 51