December 2011

From the Reference Desk

Tom Gilson

Against the Grain, gilsont@cofc.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>

Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gilson, Tom (2011) "From the Reference Desk," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 23: Iss. 6, Article 29.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6049>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

From the Reference Desk

by **Tom Gilson** (Associate Editor, *Against the Grain*, and Head of Reference Emeritus, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC 29401) <gilson@cofc.edu>

The *International Encyclopedia of Political Science* (2011, 978-1412959636, \$1,095) is a new eight-volume set published by **Sage** and is a major undertaking developed in partnership with the **International Political Science Association**. As such, well-respected scholars **Bertrand Badie**, **Institut d'études politiques** Paris, France; **Dirk Berg-Schlosser**, **Philipps-Universität Marburg**, Germany; and **Leonardo Morlino**, **LUISS Guido Carli** were enlisted to serve as general editors. They and the publishers have set an ambitious goal of covering "every field of politics from political theory and methodology to political sociology, comparative politics, public policies, and international relations." In order to meet this demanding challenge, an international cast of scholars was gathered drawing particularly from Europe and the United States. The overall results are impressive.

Although the *Encyclopedia* mentions events and people, for the most part it is not about them. The focus is on key ideas and concepts as well as the numerous "aspects of political life" that make up the study of political science globally. Specifically, there are articles on topics as different as Anarchy and the Rule of Law; Electoral Behavior and Military Rule; Colonialism and Nationalist Movements; Monetary Relations and Social Class; Stalinism and Theories of Democracy; and Street Level Bureaucracy and Monarchy. There are also individual articles that cover gender, race, and ethnic concerns, those that explore both qualitative and quantitative methods of research; and those that discuss the impacts of various religions on political life.

While some non-scholars may find it of interest, this set is not intended for a lay audience. All of the articles are grounded in serious research and informed by the literature of the discipline. Although there are a few tables and charts included, the articles are text rich and dense. Nonetheless, they will be accessible to undergraduate majors not to mention graduate students and faculty. As you would expect, each entry has a useful bibliography and relevant "see also" references. In addition, there is a Reader's Guide that organizes articles by broad topic to assist researchers.

The *International Encyclopedia of Political Science* offers the reader informed and well-researched discussions of the ideas, concepts, and theories that lie at the foundation of

the discipline. It also touches on the international aspects of the various topics covered as well as in specific entries like those on Balance of Power, Alliances, Genocide, Multilateralism and International Trade. As such, this title is an ideal companion to **Sage's** more U.S. focused *Encyclopedia of Political Science* (2010, 978-1933116440, \$800). Academic libraries that support strong political science curriculums will want this new title in their collection.

As with other **Sage** reference publications, the *International Encyclopedia of Political Science* is available online. You can request a free 30-day online trial at www.sagepub.com/freetrial.

Sage also brings solid scholarship to a slightly trendier topic with its *Encyclopedia of Social Networks* (2011, 978-1412979115, \$315). However, this two-volume set is far more than a discussion of **Facebook** and **Twitter**. Edited by **George A. Barnett** of the **University of California, Davis**, this work takes a much broader and more complex tack, tracing social networking from the kinship networks of Ancient China to Renaissance art salons to blogs and wikis. But it offers more than a historic perspective. As he makes clear in his introduction, **Mr. Barnett** and his contributors view the study of social networks as interdisciplinary and the *Encyclopedia* tries to reflect this perspective discussing the science as well as the social, political, and historic aspects of networking.

Given this premise, there are articles that discuss the network science behind Wi-Fi and GPS systems as well as very specific tools and strategies like Random Graph Models and Quadratic Assignment Procedure. Other articles explore the human dynamics of social networks in topics as diverse as fraternities, neighborhood organizations, religious communities, and gangs. In addition, specific social networking communities and organizations have their own entries ranging from **AARP** to **Teen Communities** and from **Alcoholics Anonymous** to online networks like **LinkedIn**. A fair amount of the *Encyclopedia* also consists of articles that cover social networks as they have developed in individual countries from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe as well as in all of the states in the U.S. Each of the articles is written for an academic audience but a number of entries will appeal to interested lay readers. A chronology joins the usual value-added elements like lists of further readings, "see also" references, a Reader's Guide, a full list of entries, and an alphabetical index.

The *Encyclopedia of Social Networks* is not intended to be "an absolutely complete and comprehensive source." Rather it offers thoughtful and insightful historic background coupled with up-to-date topic coverage for a diverse and "rapidly emerging field." The two-volume print set is appropriate for both reference and circulation depending on need. Naturally, the set is also available online and is enhanced

with approximately 40 media clips. Just as with other **Sage** titles, a free trial can be requested from www.sagepub.com/freetrial.

The *Encyclopedia of South Africa* is a one-volume offering from **Lynne Rienner Publishers** (2011, 978-1588267498, \$95) that endeavors to cover the major historic, social, political, economic, and cultural developments of this complicated and often troubled nation. Edited by **Krista Johnson** and **Sean Jacobs** this reference consists of nearly 300 entries by more than 55 contributors primarily from the U.S., Great Britain, and South Africa.

The *Encyclopedia* provides substantial articles on broad topics like Law and Society, the Economy, and Theater and Performance as well as those on historic periods like British Imperialism and Settler Colonialism and political change like Democratic Politics Since 1994. These longer articles are interspersed with shorter entries that include biographical sketches and coverage of noteworthy events, influential organizations, and geographic locations.

The volume is organized alphabetically with a number of cross references and a useful index. Bibliographies follow key articles listing sources for further research. There are a series of appendices that include a chronology and listings of heads of state since 1910, government structures, provinces and major cities, political parties in the April 2009 national elections and key racial and apartheid legislation, 1856-1967.

The *Encyclopedia of South Africa* is a unique reference. It offers a concise, fact-driven approach to the issues, events, concepts, and history of an important country not previously afforded such coverage in the reference literature. It is skillfully edited, melding relevant subject selection with accessible organization to offer a well-rounded treatment of an important topic. This title will be equally, if not more welcomed in circulating collections. Both undergraduates and interested lay readers will find it of interest and it should find a home in larger public libraries as well as academic collections.

McFarland's Encyclopedia of Black Radio in the United States 1921-1955 (2011, 978-0786463152, \$95) treats an area of African American popular culture often neglected. Written by **Ryan Ellett**, founder and editor of the online publication *The Old Time Radio*, this single-volume work covers approximately 300 series broadcasts, performers, and organizations making up the hey day of Black radio.

Mr. Ellett lays the foundation for his *Encyclopedia* in his introductory essay, "The Beginning of Radio," in which he discusses the pioneers of African-American radio as well as black radio's golden age, decline, and renaissance. He also goes into the obstacles that confronted African

continued on page 59

From the Reference Desk from page 58

Americans in the radio industry. The encyclopedia entries themselves cover obscure as well as famous performers and programs. Painstakingly researched and full of germane facts, the entries are written in an accessible, reader-friendly style that both researchers and *aficionados* will appreciate. Enhancing the entries, the author also provides a list of radio stations and their locations as well as a useful general bibliography of books, articles, dissertations, magazines, newspapers, and Websites. Each entry also has a list of sources used. Adding more value, there is a brief chronology of debuts and notable events and a week-by-week episode guide to two pioneering black radio programs, the *Negro Achievement Hour* and the *Negro Art Group Hour*.

The *Encyclopedia of Black Radio in the United States 1921-1955* is one of those works that enlivens as well as informs. It offers a brief but fascinating look at what is now a cultural artifact and helps bring it back to life. It is an obvious labor of love that will benefit both scholars and interested readers. One only wishes that the publication budget would have allowed for photos to complement the text. Regardless, this is another reference title that will be equally at home in circulation and is appropriate for both academic and public library collections. It is not available electronically. (This title will act as a worthy complement for libraries owning **Henry T. Sampson's** *Swingin' on the Ether Waves: A Chronological History of African Americans in Radio and Television Broadcasting, 1925-1955* (2005, 978-0810840874, \$446.55).

McFarland has also revised an out-of-print *LJ* "Best of Reference" title that a number of reference librarians may have come across in their travels. *Antarctica: an Encyclopedia* (2011, 978-0786435906, \$495) first published in 1990 is now in its second edition and has been greatly expanded. In fact, Editor **John Stewart** has doubled the number of entries to 30,000, obviously taking pains to insure that twenty years of change and discovery are adequately represented in this work.

All entries are arranged alphabetically and value-added features include numerous cross-references making up for the lack of an index as well as a selective bibliography that should please serious scholars. But it is the *Encyclopedia* entries that are obviously the big draw. They offer straightforward and thorough coverage of historical events, key explorers and expeditions, scientists and scientific discoveries, ships and equipment, and the flora and fauna that make up the story of Antarctica. But perhaps the biggest contribution is the attention paid to geographical locations and features. While numerous national gazetteers were employed to gather information, heavy use was also made of the SCAR (Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research) composite gazetteer. The results are a comprehensive reflection of the geography of this fascinating continent. Each of these entries gives the precise latitude and longitude of the location/feature, a brief but clearly written descrip-

tion and a discussion of its naming. (In fairness, it must also be said that the *Encyclopedia* offers an equally thorough and comprehensive treatment in those articles touching on the history, science, and personalities of Antarctica.)

Antarctica: an Encyclopedia is crammed full of names, dates, and facts that the diligent researcher will revel in. Editor **John Stewart** has produced a serious and scholarly work from numerous sources for which he deserves a great deal of credit. This work will be most at home in academic libraries or on the personal shelves of the devoted scholar. It is not available electronically.

Libraries looking for a solid reference with numerous color photos and a focus on the environment, ecology, and wildlife will want to consider *Antarctica and the Arctic: The Complete Encyclopedia* (2001, 978-1552975459, available used from sites like **Amazon**).

The *Settlement of America* (2011, 978-0765619846, \$245) is a new reference work from **ME Sharpe** whose subtitle: *Encyclopedia of Westward Expansion from Jamestown to the closing of the Frontier* gives you a pretty good idea of its focus. Edited by **James Crutchfield**, **Candy Moulton**, and **Terry A. Del Bene**, this two-volume set provides readers with some 500 articles covering "personalities and peoples, places, events, institutions, movements, and many other topics on the expanding frontier."

The *Settlement of America* also has number of value-added features, not the least of which is the introductory section of essays that discuss major themes and lay a foundation for the rest of the encyclopedia. These essays broadly discuss topics like the initial Trans-Appalachian Frontier and the Indian tribes that first populated the West as well as major commercial motivators like the Fur Trade and various Gold Rushes. In addition, there are essays on key developments in transport like the Overland Trails and the Railroads as well as entries on the importance of the Military. There is also an essay that touches on the Arts and Letters that influenced the frontier. These introductory essays are followed by the articles themselves and include specific biographical entries, coverage of particular Indian tribes, and discussions of various expeditions and surveys, wars and battles, laws and treaties, key trails and passes, and important territorial acquisitions. Each entry has a brief list of further readings and the set has a "topic finder" grouping related subjects as well as a general index. The text is written in a reader-friendly, fact-based fashion and is enhanced with photos and illustrations. A chronology and a solid collection of primary documents round out the *Encyclopedia*.

The *Settlement of America* will appeal to a diverse audience including lay readers, high school students, and first-year undergraduates. It offers useful background information on both familiar and more obscure topics as well as providing leads to further research. As such it should be considered by public, high school and college libraries and is appropriate for both reference and circulating collections depending on need. Libraries already owning other titles like **Macmillan's** *Encyclopedia of the American West* (1996, 978-0028974958, available used on

sites like **Amazon**) and **Yale University Press's** *New Encyclopedia of the American West* (1998, 978-0300070880, \$85) will want it to update and enhance their collections. This title is also available on **Sharpe Online Reference** <http://www.sharpe-online.com/SOLR/a/book-abstract/24>.

The *ALA Guide to Medical and Health Sciences Reference* (2011, 978-0-8389-1023-8 \$75) is another spin off from **ALA's** online *Guide to Reference* (www.guidetoreference.org). As such it offers annotated listings of sources ranging from handbooks and encyclopedias to Websites and online databases intended to assist researchers in locating facts and background information on a variety of topics.

The *Guide* consists of nearly 1,600 entries organized under thirteen major categories or chapters. These chapters cover broad topics as diverse as bioethics, health care, and toxicology while including other areas of interest like consumer health, nutrition, nursing, medical jurisprudence, health care, pharmacology, and psychiatry. As with past *Guides* drawn from the online *Guide to Reference*, each chapter is divided by format or type of resource. There is a wide range of formats including dictionaries, directories, histories, encyclopedias, handbooks, statistical sources, and of course, websites and databases. Each entry offers bibliographic information and/or websites addresses as well as clear and descriptive annotations.

The editors are on target when they say that the *ALA Guide to Medical and Health Sciences Reference* is a "usably comprehensive rather than exhaustive" listing. And although it includes some foreign language titles, it consists of predominantly English language sources. Regardless, its utility for academic librarians as well as those in specialized medical libraries is undeniable. Naturally it can be used as a tool to locate the most useful sources to answer a specific research inquiry but it can also aid as a selection tool for both electronic and print collection development, as well as a resource in developing online finding aids for numerous medical and health related topics. 🌿

Book Reviews from page 57

of librarians in popular culture." The book's contribution to the professional literature about Generation X Librarians provides an inside look at the profession and the changes it is facing. *The Generation X Librarian: Essays on Leadership, Technology, Pop Culture, Social Responsibility and Professional Identity* is a valuable practical aid for any librarian. The book has something for everyone, whether you are a Baby Boomer trying to manage a Gen Xer, a Gen X Librarian trying to find your way, or a Millennial just entering or thinking about joining the library profession. This is one book that you will want to read, keep, and re-read.

The Generation X Librarian: Essays on Leadership, Technology, Pop Culture, Social Responsibility and Professional Identity is available at www.mcfarlandpub.com or by calling 800-253-2187. 🌿