

2014

From the Reference Desk: Reviews of Reference Titles

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Recommended Citation

Gilson, Tom (2017) "From the Reference Desk: Reviews of Reference Titles," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 26: Iss. 3, Article 24.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6764>

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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>

Multicultural America: a Multimedia Encyclopedia (2013, 978-1452216836, \$495) is a timely release from **SAGE Reference** that deals with an increasingly significant topic. Edited by **Carlos Cortes**, professor of history emeritus at the **University of California, Riverside**, this four-volume set consists of more than 900 signed entries that are informed by data from the 2010 census and reflect the evolving changes in the U.S. population that the census vividly portrays. In fact, the overall relevance of census information is highlighted by a separate section of more than 20 essays discussing the “historical development of racial and ethnic census categorizations” as well as various population patterns, definitions, and demographic changes revealed by the census.

As relevant as this is, the main body of the encyclopedia still consists of the A-Z listing of articles that are devoted to more than 200 ethnic groups as well as selected issues related to those groups like language, religion, education, and institutions. In addition, there are entries on specific events as well as topics like related laws and court decisions, the impact of immigration, intergroup relations, ethnic images in popular culture, and various cultural and social intersections with ethnicity. All of the articles are signed and provide the contributor’s academic affiliation. The treatment is scholarly but accessible and its conclusions supported by facts and data. As you would expect each entry has a bibliography and list of “see also” references. Photos, charts, and illustrations are interspersed to provide visual relief and support. Finding aids include a topical Reader’s Guide, an alphabetical list of all articles, and a thorough and well-designed general index. There is also a chronology, a glossary, and a resource guide as well as an appendix of reprints from the 2010 census of population descriptions, demographic maps, and statistical charts and tables.

Multicultural America: a Multimedia Encyclopedia offers compelling evidence of the ways in which various ethnic groups have adjusted, adapted and become part of the American mosaic. It also points to the continuing and dramatic changes our population is experiencing as we move toward a future when there will be no majority but only a diverse collection of minorities. And it does so using a comprehensive,



thoughtful, and fact-filled approach that will benefit both students and seasoned researchers. Given its relevance to disciplines ranging from history to ethnic studies and from sociology to demographics, this set should find a place in numerous academic libraries. The online edition is available via **SAGE Knowledge** and offers more than 350 photos and 100 video clips that illustrate and enhance the text.

American Civil War: The Definitive Encyclopedia and Document Collection (2013, 978-1851096770, \$625) is another **ABC-CLIO** reference edited by respected military historian, **Spencer C. Tucker**. In this new set, **Mr. Tucker** along with his co-editors and contributors, offer readers a six-volume work that approaches the seminal conflict in the nation’s history from a multidisciplinary perspective.

As you might expect, a great deal of the coverage focuses on the individuals that lived and died during the war with biographical sketches of both the eminent and the lesser known. And, of course, there are accounts of major battles and small engagements as well as discussions of weapons and military technology and the various military units and divisions of both the Union and the Confederacy. But this set offers far more than a military account. There are also articles that discuss issues ranging from censorship and civil liberties to abolition and slavery as well as anti-war sentiment and peace movements to Southern Nationalism and loyalty oaths. Other key topics receiving attention include the causes of the war, the roles played by women and various ethnic groups, wartime politics and elections, and the financing and cost of the war, not to mention the impact of the war on things like industry and manufacturing, medicine, education, and music and literature.

The first five volumes consist of nearly 3,000 fact-filled and concise articles, all with brief bibliographies listing two to three sources. Of course, major engagements, campaigns, and personalities are afforded more extensive entries. Numerous maps, especially of the key battles, along with black-and-white photos and illustrations highlight and complement the text. Volume five also contains a number of additional features including lists of medals, decorations, and military honors and ranks; a glossary; a chronology; a collected bibliography; and a full list of contributors. However, the final volume provides researchers with perhaps the most important value-added feature in the set. It consists of 172 Civil War-related primary sources arranged chronologically from the earliest fugitive slave act in 1793 to “A Horseman in the Sky,” an **Ambrose Bierce** short story published in 1892. These sources take a variety of forms ranging from excerpts from memoirs to poetry and songs; political speeches to personal letters; diary entries to

Presidential proclamations; and military correspondence to book excerpts. Each has its own introduction and a citation referencing the source.

American Civil War: The Definitive Encyclopedia and Document Collection lives up to its title. It is a definitive reference that any serious collection covering the U.S. Civil War will want on its shelves. It is comprehensive and authoritative with additional features that increase its usefulness. Readers from Civil War buffs to professional historians will find value and utility in these pages. The set is also available in a Kindle edition from **Amazon** as well as from **ABC-CLIO** as an eBook (eISBN: 978-1-85109-682-4). Call 800-368-6868 ext. 2 or email <suborder@abc-clio.com> for pricing.

Another resource that those fascinated by the U.S. Civil War will want to consider is a recent entry in **Salem Press’ Defining Documents of American History** series. Edited by highly respected Civil War scholar **James M. McPherson**, **Civil War (1860-1865)** (2014, 978-1-4298-3746-0, \$295) is a two-volume set providing readers with both the text and a detailed analysis and discussion of nearly 70 key primary sources arranged within broad topics.

While there is some overlap with the documents covered in **ABC-CLIO’s American Civil War: The Definitive Encyclopedia and Document Collection**, the treatment afforded each source is more comprehensive. An essay of approximately 6,000 words is devoted to each document. In addition to the full text of the document, each of these essays has a summary overview and a “defining moment” placing the document in context as well as a thoughtful analysis, coverage of essential themes, and a useful bibliography. The editors also provide a glossary of terms for each source in an effort to ensure full understanding for the modern reader.

The sources covered fall within six broad topics including: Disunion: The Sectional Crisis; The Politics of War; War Stories; The Home Front; The Destruction of Slavery; and Post War: The Politics of Race. Public documents, laws, letters, speeches, newspaper reports, and excerpts from memoirs are all represented. Although text-dense, the collection is visually enhanced with each document set off in grey scale from the rest of the entry. Additional features include a chronological list of the sources, a historical timeline, a list of Web resources, a collected bibliography, and a general index.

Defining Documents of American History: Civil War (1860-1865) will be of major value to upper division high school students, undergraduates, and the interested lay reader. In addition to the primary sources, many of which are extensive and make up a full third

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of the entry, the set provides analysis and commentary that places the source in context and explains its importance. This level of coverage combined with the chronological arrangement enables researchers to follow the history of the war via the perspective offered in these primary documents. The set will be of value in either reference or circulating collections. Given **Salem Press'** practice of offering access to the electronic version with a print purchase, one might use the electronic version as a reference and place the print copy in circulation. The set is also available individually as an eBook (e-ISBN: 978-1-4298-3749-1, single user price: \$295).

Reference librarians will welcome the recent release of the eighth edition of *Reference Sources for Small and Medium-sized Libraries* (2014, 978-0838909430, \$125). Published by **ALA Editions** and edited by **Jack O'Gorman**, this new edition updates the 2008 version and highlights sources released since that time as well as older "reference titles that have retained their relevance." According to the introduction "about 40% of the content is new to this edition."

As with past editions, the book is organized by broad subject category and then divided into related subcategories using the Dewey Decimal Classification as a guide. A variety of sources from electronic databases to multi-volume, print encyclopedias to free Websites are covered. While the majority of entries list the bibliographic information for the print edition, the emergence of electronic reference works is increasingly obvious. In fact, according to **Mr. O'Gorman** "the reader can now assume that many if not most of the titles in this guide are available in electronic form." Entries are assigned an annotation number and also include brief Dewey and LC numbers, a cost indicator, and a brief but very helpful evaluative description. In addition, an index provides author-title access via annotation number.

Reference Sources for Small and Medium-sized Libraries has been a standard reference bibliography since its first appearance in 1969. This new edition keeps up the tradition of quality and relevance. **Mr. O'Gorman** and his contributors provide an authoritative, reliable, and up-to-date annotated list of reference sources that reference librarians can use for collection development as well as when trying to pinpoint the right source to answer the question at hand. The subject coverage is impressive, as is the number of titles that are recommended with nearly 1,500 works making the cut. While the focus is on reference titles intended for small and medium sized libraries, libraries of all sizes may want to refer to this guide to help enhance their lending collections as reference collections grow smaller and many of these titles now find themselves in circulation.

Extra Servings

CQ Press has been busy during the last few months releasing two new reference titles and a new statistical database:

- *Guide to U.S. Political Parties* (978-1-4522-6780-7, \$150) applies "major conceptual approaches to the study of U.S. political parties and the national party system" in order to describe "the organization and behavior of the parties to help readers understand party origins, historical development, and current operations..."
- *Congress A to Z, 6th Edition* (978-1-4522-8752-2, \$150) provides "insight into the national legislature, its organization, processes, personalities, major legislation, and history. The Sixth Edition is completely updated, covering the dramatic congressional events of recent years, including social media usage by members of Congress, the politics of recent debt ceiling and deficit spending showdowns with the executive branch, new floor leaders in both chambers, and campaign finance patterns..."
- *U.S. Political Stats* is a "visualization and manipulation tool with data on Congress, the Supreme Court, the presidency, and elections. *U.S. Political Stats* includes facts and figures on economic and population indicators from 1982 to the present that are constantly updated as new data becomes available. Hosted on an interactive platform, users can compare different types of data such as legislative voting records and demographic characteristics, to create maps, graphs, and charts that provide unique insights into all three branches of the U.S. government..." (For pricing for *U.S. Political Stats* pricing, email <librariansales@sagepub.com>.)

SAGE Reference has also added some new titles to their catalog:

- *Encyclopedia of Health Communication* (9781452258751, \$525) is a three-volume set edited by **Teresa L. Thompson** of the **University of Oregon** that covers the field of health communications "from the dynamics of interpersonal communication between health professionals and clients to global command-and-control during public health emergencies that cross international borders..."
- *Encyclopedia of Language Development* (9781452258768, \$195) is single-volume reference edited by **Patricia J. Brooks** and **Vera Kempe** that "covers the breadth of theory and research on language development from birth through adulthood, as well as their practical application..."

The last few months saw **Oxford University Press** add two new encyclopedias to its list:

- *Oxford Encyclopedia of Islam and Politics* (978-0199739356, \$395) is a two-volume set edited by **Emad El-Din Shahin**, Professor at **The American University** in Cairo that "provides in-depth coverage of the political dimensions of Islam and the Muslim world... Based on the highly acclaimed 2009 publication, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Islam and Politics* brings together over 400 new and updated entries to create a single, specialized reference source on this important topic."
- *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Science, and Technology in Islam* (978-0199812578, \$395) is edited by **Ibrahim Kalin** of **Georgetown University** and is part of the *Oxford Encyclopedias of Islamic Studies* series. This two-volume set "provides both an overview and a comprehensive and detailed survey of the main features of philosophy, science, medicine and technology in the Muslim world. The level of entries are scholarly, based on primary and secondary sources, and aimed at advanced students of Islamic philosophy and science..."

ABC-CLIO just released a couple of new encyclopedias as well:

- *Disasters and Tragic Events: An Encyclopedia of Catastrophes in American History* (978-1-61069-165-9, \$189) is a two-volume set edited by **Mitchell Newton-Matza** and "organized chronologically" with entries that "range from natural disasters, such as hurricanes and tornadoes, to civic disturbances, environmental disasters, epidemics and medical errors, transportation accidents, and more..."
- *The Encyclopedia of the Wars of the Early American Republic, 1783-1812: A Political, Social, and Military History* (978-1-59884-156-5, \$310), edited by **Spencer C. Tucker**, is a three-volume set that "offers a comprehensive examination of U.S. military history from the beginning of the republic in 1783 up to the eve of war with Great Britain in 1812. It enables a detailed study of the Early Republic, during which ideological and political divisions occurred over the fledgling U.S. military. The entries cover all the important battles, key individuals, weapons, Indian nations, and treaties, as well as numerous social, political, cultural, and economic developments during this period..."

All of the above reference titles are available electronically. Please check the various publisher Websites for further information. 🐼