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From the Reference Desk

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integrating with our existing workflows. As
there is no ideal ERM that can address the
myriad of issues that we would like to resolve,
the question becomes, which system best
meets our core requirements, and integrates
with future workflow planning in technical
services? And if we develop our own ERM
—or discovery layer tools or content manage-
ment systems, for that matter — what standards
are good enough?

What is good enough for participation lev-
els for institutional repositories? This question
is fraught with political and logistical issues in
the academy. At some point, though, we need
to accept that full participation is unlikely, and
that we need to focus our efforts strategically —
this would first mean defining a realistic
benchmark of success, and partnering with
those who can help us achieve it. Similarly,
we will never reach all students through infor-
mation literacy programs, no matter how
zealous and proactive we are. How, then, do
we determine our yardstick of effectiveness?
How do we determine the outcomes and decide
what is good enough? The research literature
makes it clear that reference service is never as
effective as we would like it to be. What level
of effectiveness can we live with, particularly
as we try to balance our efforts and limited
resources across many library services and
initiatives?

While *Voltaire* didn’t work in a 21st cen-
tury library (and certainly wouldn’t recognize
it as a library!) he could teach us a thing or two
about the problems of reaching beyond our
circumstances. Yes, we do need to dream about
how we could provide a range of outstanding
services, programs, and collections, but in an
era of fiscal restraint and fundamental reassess-
ment in many libraries, this is an opportunity to
make critical decisions about focusing energy
on high value services that offer the greatest
impact for the dollars available, in terms of
how we conceive the library in three, five, and
ten years time. What will be the library’s role
in ten years? Do we have a reasonably clear
consensus in our libraries on this point? I think
that much depends on our assumptions here.
In what new ways will we be enabling learning
and collaboration, for example? To what extent
will new forms of scholarly communication be
driving our collections budget?

Which brings me back to *Voltaire* — “The
perfect is the enemy of the good.” Once we
have distilled the nature of “good” in today’s
context we can focus on tangibly achieving it.
Many of us have been down this difficult
road of reassessment before, but the social
and technological complexity in our landscape is
on a scale far greater than anything we’ve seen
before. It will require a quantum leap in vision,
courage, and leadership.

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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>

Some reference works appear to be too
specialized for broad application. The
**Encyclopedia of the First Amendment**
(2009, 978-0-87289-311-5, $285) with its nar-
row sounding title, seems like it might fall into
that category. However, first amendment rights
are so essential to the freedoms and liberties
that we enjoy, nothing could be further from the
truth. The freedom of religion, the press, and
the right to assembly and petition the govern-
ment are core elements in the political, cultural
and historic development of the nation giving
this work wide ranging relevance.

An initial examination of this two-volume
set reveals the scope of the topics and issues
covered. In more than 1,400 entries, issues
ranging from affirmative action to intelligent
design to zoning laws are cov-
ered. There are also entries
dealing with specific legal concepts like the
separation of church and state, censorship, the
equal time rule, gag orders, prior restraint and
tolerance theory. Added to this, there are nu-
umerous articles that treat relevant court cases,
documents, laws, and government entities as
well as related organizations and influential
people.

However, one might argue that equally
 germane are the seven essays that serve as an
introduction and overview. These essays place
the establishment and free exercise of religion
clauses, as well as freedom of speech, freedom
of the press and the right to petition and assem-
bly in historic context. They also discuss how
these rights have been incorporated into the due
process clause of the fourteenth Amendment as
well as worldwide attitudes about first amend-
ment rights and its possible future impacts and
interpretation.

The set also has a number of high quality
value added features. Providing additional as-
sistance to readers is a topical table of contents,
a legal case table of contents, a chronology, a
list of online resources, a select bibliography,
and individual case and subject indexes.

The **Encyclopedia of the First Amendment**
is an important and unique scholarly contribu-
tion. Editors John R. Vile, David L Hudson
Jr. and David Schultz have proven track
records and their expertise is on full display

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The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales
and Fairy Tales (2008, 978-0-313-33441-2,
$299.95) is a three-volume set that deals with
a growing area of scholarly interest. Folk and
fairy tales are part of almost every culture and
the **Encyclopedia** reflects this “global context.”
And while editor Donald Haase admits that
given space limitations, coverage is “representa-
tive and not comprehensive,” nonetheless,
he and his contributors attempt to survey the
discipline “from antiquity to the present” using
a multidisciplinary approach that mirrors
today’s scholarship.

Regarding actual content, the 670 entries in
these three volumes can be grouped into
eight distinct categories. There are articles that
cover specific genres like ballads and legends
as well as those that deal with cultural, national,
regional and linguistic groups ranging from

continued on page 52
Celtic to Pacific Island tales. There are also articles that define the critical terms, concepts and methods used by scholars in the field along with those that treat motifs, themes and character types. In addition, there are entries that discuss eras and movements, and various media and other cultural forms including television, film, animation and video. And of course there are entries for individual authors, scholars, collectors, artists, and translators as well as those for specific works as diverse as Hansel and Gretel, Snow White, the Wizard of Oz and the Arabian Nights.

The articles can range in length from one page biographical sketches to essays four to five pages long (at least one entry is ten pages.) “See also” references are provided in bold within the text of each article and each entry has a list of further readings as well as selected Web resources and other media. In addition, there is a substantial bibliography in volume three including a list of folktales and fairy tale anthologies and collections, a list of scholarly resources, a selection of relevant journal titles, and finally, an annotated list of quality Web resources. Other helpful features are a guide to tale type, motif, migratory legend and ballad, a guide to related topics and a general index.

Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales is a serious and scholarly treatment of a growing field of study. Readers will find the coverage of genres, cultural and regional groupings, and the discussions of themes, motifs and critical concepts very enlightening. However, the Encyclopedia offers another equally valuable service. Besides providing such useful definitions and background information for students and scholars, the Encyclopedia shows the direction the field has taken during the past 30 years as well as highlighting how these traditional folk forms have been integrated into modern media ranging from graphic novels to the Internet. It is not meant as a comprehensive study so there may be those who quibble about some of the topic selection. However, this work remains a unique and current contribution that gives readers a strong foundation. Without a doubt, academic libraries supporting courses in folk and fairy tales studies will want it in their collections.

The Encyclopedia of Gender and Society (2009, 978-1-4129-0139-6, $350) is another entry in Sage Publications’ growing list of social studies encyclopedias. Edited by Jodi O’Brien of Seattle University these two volumes contain more than 500 entries authored by scholars from academic institutions throughout the United States and the United Kingdom. This is a serious academic work and it is apparent that a major goal of this encyclopedia is to present gender as a “primary lens” through which society views itself. After spending some time with this set and examining its content, one is hard pressed to argue with that contention.

The Encyclopedia is divided into categories containing articles that reflect and highlight gender’s centrality in human social life. These categories are wide ranging and include art, popular culture, and sports, body image and health, crime, economics, environment and ecology, politics, policy and social movements, race and ethnicity, marriage and the family, relationships, religion and spirituality, education, science and technology, sexuality and reproduction and gender identity. The set also has a number of what are called “framing” articles that set the tone. Entries like Gender Identities and Socialization, Media and Gender Socialization and Sexuality and Reproduction provide overviews that point to the defining role of gender. Individual articles also address subjects ranging from chivalry to cybersex and from transgender studies to teen pregnancy. The set does not shy away from controversy providing coverage of issues like female circumcision and genital mutilation, sexual slavery, honor killings and sterilization. The articles are written in a straightforward and factual style while being grounded in recent scholarship, as the individual article bibliographies show. Each entry has “see also” references and there is a Reader’s Guide that groups related articles as well as an alphabetical list of all entries and a helpful general index.

Academic libraries supporting courses on gender and related studies will find the Encyclopedia of Gender and Society a highly valued addition to their collections. Not only does it stand on its own merits, with its focus on gender’s role in society, this set is an obvious complement to other resources like Macmillan Reference’s four-volume work Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender (2007, 978-0-02-866115-5, $425).

Charleston Conference, November 4-7, 2009, in Charleston, SC, USA. “We are very pleased that our survey topic was selected entirely by the library community, and we would like to thank those who participated for their input and support,” says Professor David Nicholas, Director of the Department of Information Studies, UCL Centre for Publishing and CIBER research group. “We realize that librarians are frequently asked to participate in surveys, and there have been a number of studies conducted this year. By having librarian-