From the Reference Desk

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Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.2751

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Any library interested in the history of photography should seriously consider Routledge’s most recent contribution to the field. Edited by John Hannavy, the Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography (2008, 978-0-415-97235-2, $440) offers readers an impressive and painstakingly researched reference work. According to the introduction there are 1,197 articles in this two-volume set: “610 major entries of 1,000 to 5,000 words, and additional 587 shorter entries.” In addition, there are numerous images throughout the set that show examples of 19th century photographs, as well as pictures of the equipment use.

But of course it is the serious scholarly content of the entries that impresses most. Numerous entries are biographies of both famous and little known photographers and inventors, as well as their patrons and critics. There are also articles that offer national and regional surveys from places as remote as the Arctic and Antarctica to the countries of Western Europe as well as the United States, and from countries in Africa and South East Asia to those in Central and Latin America. By doing so, the Encyclopedia recognizes the contributions of indigenous practitioners who up to this point have been largely neglected. In addition, there are articles on early photographic processes, technology, and equipment, as well as those that discuss 19th century photographic societies and institutions, publications devoted to photography, and companies that were pioneers in the field of commercial photography.

Each entry has a list of further readings appropriate to the importance and scope of the article and “see also” references link related articles. There is a thorough and comprehensive general index, as well as an alphabetical and thematic list of all the entries.

Combined with Routledge’s earlier Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Photography (2006, 1579583938, $395), this reference provides readers with comprehensive coverage that sets the standard in the field. These works reveal the richness and surprising diversity of photographic history and provide an obvious starting place for students, as well as a vital source of easily accessible information for practicing scholars. Academic libraries supporting photography curricula will want both the newly published Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography and if they do not already own it, the companion Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Photography.

Treaties with American Indians: An Encyclopedia of Rights, Conflicts, and Sovereignty (2008, 978-1-57607-808-8, $285) is a three-volume work recently published by ABC-CLIO that will appeal to a number of libraries. The first thing that strikes you about this set is the arrangement. Eschewing the typical alphabetical format, these three volumes offer different but complimentary content that is held together by a general index reprinted in each volume and individual tables of contents.

The first volume consists of broad thematic essays that treat historic periods from colonial treaties to current agreements, Indian and government views of treaty making, treaty responsibilities and reserved rights, and related treaty issues specific to Canada, Alaska and Hawaii. This volume also contains six essays that provide overviews of treaty making in different regions from the Southeast and Florida to the Northern Plains; the Southwest to the Northeast and the Great Lakes and California and the Pacific Northwest to Canada. The second volume concentrates on the treaties themselves. It has descriptions of U.S. and Canadian treaties arranged in chronological order, entries on important treaty sites, and a section of primary sources consisting of 40 actual treaties. Volume three provides a series of articles that give the reader a historical chronology of events and legal cases, as well as bibliographical sketches of those involved in treaty making. Another section has entries that discuss treaty related issues ranging from assimilation to Indian removal and from sovereignty to the right of conquest.

Admittedly, such an arrangement requires more time to adjust to, but by working with it, one can get a better sense of the interconnectedness of the various historic elements within the process of treaty making. Editor Donald L. Fixico’s introduction is also worth reading in this regard.

Value added features include a list of alternative tribal names and spellings, tribal name meanings, a list of treaties by tribe, a guide to common treaty names and a selected bibliography. In addition, each essay/entry has a list of further readings.

Although one might argue that Treaties with American Indians: An Encyclopedia of Rights, Conflicts, and Sovereignty focuses on only one aspect of the American Indian — European encounter. Such treaties and agreements were, and are, essential elements within that relationship. They embody and reflect the political, social and legal history of that encounter. As such, these treaties, and the context in which they were made, offer a broader perspective that the title of the encyclopedia leads one to believe.

Editor Donald L. Fixico and his contributors provide a unique reference that should draw serious attention from academic libraries collecting in this area. Larger public libraries might consider it as well.

(Broader reference works treating American Indian history are also worthy of addition to many collections. They include the Encyclopedia of American Indian History (2007, 978-1-85109-817-0, $295) which is another recent ABC-CLIO title and The Gale Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes (1998, 978-0-787610876). This older title is available used, via Amazon. The most essential title in this area remains the Smithsonian’s multi-volume Handbook of North American Indians that is available by individual volume via Amazon and other online book sellers.)

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Facts on File has been busy publishing a number of interesting single-volume encyclopedias and the Encyclopedia of Hurricanes, Typhoons and Cyclones (2008, 9780816062959, $75) is an obvious example. Written by David Longshore, this is a second edition of a Library Journal’s and New York Public Library’s “Best of Reference” selection.

In this updated version, Longshore adds ten years of new information including coverage of individual storms, new forecasting technologies and developments in specific regions, states and countries prone to tropical events. There are also numerous articles that define storm and weather related terms ranging from the Fujiwara effect to extratropical cyclones and Doppler radar to tropical waves. In total, there are nearly 400 entries, 80 of which are new to this second edition. A number of appendices also add useful information. The encyclopedia includes a chronology, a list of hurricane safety procedures, a list of named hurricanes, typhoons, cyclones and tropical storms, and a section recommending Websites for tracking tropical events. There is also a collected bibliography of relevant books and periodical articles.

However, the general index could have been more thorough. For example, in looking for information about the city of Charleston and its history of hurricanes, the index is no help. Charleston is not listed in the alphabetical index although it is mentioned in the entries on South Carolina and in articles on individual storms like Hurricane Hugo. Obviously, in cases like this, the inclusion of “see” references in the index would have been useful. And while there is a list of A to Z entries, a topical or thematic index would be helpful as an additional finding aid in linking related articles.
As you would expect of a reference work, the facts of each case are presented clearly and thoroughly. But each essay also discusses elements like the media’s role, public perceptions, contemporary impacts and the case’s aftermath and legacy. Visually enhanced by black and white photos and sidebars containing timelines, brief biographies and definitions, these two volumes are as enjoyable to browse as they are informative to read. Besides being compelling as individual articles, each one has suggestions for further reading, as well as a list of references useful for continued research.

**Crimes & Trials of the Century** is factual, fun and thought-provoking. It indulges our fascination with such events while raising often uncomfortable issues about American popular culture that are part of our history and that remain with us today. While suitable for some reference collections, many libraries will want this set available for circulation. Given the length of the articles and the popularity of the topic, a number of readers will want to check this title out to explore at leisure.