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From the Reference Desk

Thomas Gilson

College of Charleston, gilsont@cofc.edu

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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) <gilsont@cofc.edu>

The struggle for civil liberties is at the core of America’s beginning and runs throughout our history. Needless to say, it has been a complex process with numerous contradictions and inconsistencies. The search for religious freedom, the right to privacy, and due process played out in tandem with the institution of slavery, immigration restrictions and blacklist. This complexity is only compounded by our age of “high-tech terror” pitting civil liberties against society’s need to be protected.

Helping to sort through these vital issues is a recent encyclopedia published by Routledge. Edited by respected scholar Paul Finkelman, the Encyclopedia of American Civil Liberties (2006, 0415943426, $475) contains 1,423 entries that vary in length from 250 to 6,000 words. Articles discuss major personalities and influential laws and legal cases, as well as treating broader themes, issues, and events.

The biographical entries run the gamut from historic figures like James Madison, Frederick Douglass, and Margaret Sanger to contemporaries ranging from Janet Reno to John Ashcroft to Larry Flynn. Numerous legal cases and individual laws are presented providing their context, relevance and resulting impacts. Larger themes and concepts from affirmative action to rule of law and from victims’ rights to theories of privacy are covered as are historical overviews on topics as diverse as the right to bear arms, judicial review, segregation, and sentencing guidelines.

The articles are well written and grounded in historical and legal precedence with the overall treatment comprehensive, scholarly and attuned to the importance of the topics being discussed. There is solid use of “see also” references and a thematic list of entries linking related articles. Each entry has a brief bibliography or a list of cases and statutes cited, in most instances, both. The 189-page general index is thorough and makes use of numerous sub-headings to take readers to specific aspects of larger topics.

The Encyclopedia of American Civil Liberties is a timely and important reference. Browsing its contents and reading individual articles reminds us of the pivotal role this struggle for civil liberties has played in our history. Simultaneously, it points to the necessity of keeping this struggle in the forefront of our concerns as we move into the future. This set is a definite purchase for most academic libraries and should receive serious consideration from larger public libraries. High school libraries may want to first consider the Encyclopedia of Civil Liberties in America edited by David Schultz and John R. Vile and published by M. E. Sharpe (2005, 0-7656-8063-7, $299).

Sage Publications recently released a single volume encyclopedia that will be equally at home on reference or circulating shelves. Edited by Barney Warf, the Encyclopedia of Human Geography (2006, 0761988550, $150) helps define the parameters of this evolving area of geographic study, as well as offering a rich source of background information for numerous concepts, themes and approaches.

As characterized in this encyclopedia, human geography is more than the geography of place. Human geography relates to the “study of how societies construct places, how humans use the surface of the earth, how social phenomena are distributed spatially, and how we bring space into consciousness.” The individual entries in this work provide such linkages in a clear understandable fashion, while at the same time, maintaining their scholarly

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initiated through programs sponsored by the International Council of Scientific Unions. Operating from 1995 through 2005 the LUCC helped define the differences, as well as the linkages, between land cover, “the biophysical state of the earth’s surface” and land use, “the manner in which biophysical attributes of land are manipulated.” The Encyclopedia presents the “crucial terms and topics” resulting from this research in more than 300 entries.

However, editor Geist wisely starts the first volume with three helpful introductory essays. Entitled “Land Change as a Forcing Function in the Global Environment,” “Land Use Change in a Global Historical Perspective,” and “Land Cover Change,” these essays provide the foundation for the rest of the encyclopedia. They are well worth reading and reference related articles within the rest of the text. The individual entries fall within broad categories and treat types of land change ranging from cropland to forest and from urban-industrial to rangeland. Other articles cover specific causes and impacts of land change, as well as aspects of land use dynamics and land cover conversion and modification. There are also articles discussing individual countries and regions, specific conventions and environmental agreements and analytical techniques like modeling and satellite imagery methods. Most of these articles range from 1,000 to 2,500 words although shorter entries often describe influential organizations or offer the brief biographical sketches that are contained in the Encyclopedia. Aside from a general index there is a useful guide to related topics by category and an alphabetical list of entries. There are numerous “see also” references at the end of each entry, as well as references to related articles by the use of bold type within the text.

Although primarily intended as a reference work, Our Earth’s Changing Land: an Encyclopedia of Land-Use and Land Cover Change is another work that could be place in either reference or circulation collections. It addresses topics of increasing interest and importance in a timely and thorough fashion. Informed by recent scholarship, this work should answer specific questions, as well as provide stimulation for further inquiry. While it is most appropriate for academic libraries, larger public libraries with patrons interested in these issues would do well to consider it.

Sports are big business with an ever expanding growth potential. A quick look though Grey House Publishing’s 2006 Sports Market Place Directory (2006, 1592371396, $225) makes this obvious. Packed into this bulky paperback and its 2,294 pages are some 15,487 listings, (up 2,173 from 2005). In addition, there are 13,883 Websites (up 2,561), 8961 email addresses (up 3,334), and listings for 58,898 key executives (up 22,283). In order to manage all this information, the Directory is divided into ten chapters with each chapter having its own index. The first chapter covers professional sports leagues and other single sport organizations while chapter two lists multi-sports organizations like those devoted to disabled sports, youth sports and the Olympics. The third chapter deals with college sports, both NAIA and NCAA. The remaining seven chapters cover events, meetings and trade shows, the media, sports sponsors, professional services, facilities, manufacturers, and statistics. In short, the 2006 Sports Market Place Directory provides a single source for the address, contacts and description of the Arena Football League, as well as for the US Olympic Education Center, the New York City Marathon, the Golf Channel, the Saratoga Race Course and Jantzen, Inc. In addition, there are statistics on topics ranging from female sports participation to fitness equipment purchases to NCAA attendance figures. Fortunately, given all this diverse content, the Directory is well organized and arranged for ease of use. Beside the indexes for each chapter, there are cumulative entry, executive and geographic indexes. Convenient fold out tabs identify each chapter and provide “finger tip” access.

Public libraries where there is demand for such information and academic libraries supporting sports management curriculum will want to consider this resource. Those libraries where there is a great deal of use for such information will want to consider the online version, annual subscription $479.00, or the online database & directory combination, annual subscription $650. For more information on these options check out http://www.greyhouse.com/sports.htm.

Both science librarians and chemistry faculty and students will be glad to know a new edition of the Merck Index (2006, 091191000X, $125) is available. Now in its 14th edition this indispensable standard should find a home on both library and personal books shelves. This edition contains 10,200 “monographs” that discuss “significant chemicals, drugs, and biologically active substances,” and Editors have created “over 5,000 of these monographs have been significantly revised and updated.” And while more than 500 monographs have been combined or deleted in this print volume, there is an accompanying CD-ROM that archives them, as well as those combined or deleted from the 12th edition. Each entry has the title of the compound, its Chemical Abstracts registry number and name, alternative names or trademarks, the molecular formula and weight, the percentage of composition and other chemical information including literature references. In addition each entry has structural diagrams, physical data for the compound, derivative compound, use and therapeutic category. A section of organic name reactions lists those chemical reactions that have “come to be recognized and referred to by name within the chemistry community.” In addition, there is a list of chemical abstract registry numbers, as well as finding aids including the therapeutic category and biological index, the formula index and the name index. There is also a series of supplemental resources

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ranging from a glossary and a chemical terms translator to a list of universal conversion factors and a table of minerals.

In short, the Merck Index is a definite addition for any library collection where this type of information is in demand. Those interested in the online version can visit http://www.merckbooks.com/mindex/online.html.

Below is a guest review of ABC-CLIO's: The Crusades: an Encyclopedia edited by Alan V. Murray. The review is by Jared A. Seay, Addlestone Library, College of Charleston.

The 11th century summons of Pope Urban II to the knights of Europe to "liberate" their fellow Christians in the Holy Land began a religion fueled struggle of which the current conflict in the Middle East is an enduring descendant. Edited by Alan V. Murray, The Crusades: an Encyclopedia (2006, 1,576078520, $385) is the first major reference work of its kind and size to cover "the most influential religious movements of the Middle Ages." This four volume set published by ABC-CLIO encompasses the entire "crusade movement from its beginnings in the 11th century through the early modern period, including crusades to the Holy Land, Iberia, Greece, Eastern Europe, the Baltic region, and elsewhere." Indeed, what struck me while reading through the well written, detailed entries of these volumes was how the idea of "crusade" was by no means restricted to the liberation of the Holy Land or to even to non-Christians. Though initially called by Pope Urban II in 1095 to free the Holy Land of infidels, crusade — the idea of going to war to eradicate heretics and/or infidels — was increasingly summoned by kings and popes in every corner of Christendom. Crusades were called against other Christians with most of the major wars for the next 500 years started by those in power to stamp out perceived heresies (even the Norman conquest of England in 1066 was under a papal banner).

The Crusades: an Encyclopedia is comprehensive in its approach and covers many concepts, terms, details and matters related to the idea of crusade in medieval thought. The first volume contains a chronology of the crusades, a "Principle Narrative and Legal Sources for the Crusades" and a very useful and extensive 18-page introduction to the crusades, which I would recommend to any student wanting initial background information on the subject. There is also an appendix of "Plans of Castles in Frankish Greece and Cyprus." The last volume contains a section called "Texts and Documents." These are primary documents which include letters to and from crusaders, kings, and clergy, as well as royal reports, deeds, chronicles, and crusade songs and ballads. This four volume set has over 1,000 signed alphabetical entries which each have bibliographical references. They include translated texts on individual crusades, rulers, places, people, institutions, and chronologies of expeditions. There are also 54 maps, numerous period paintings and modern photographs of battle sites and castles. Although the maps included are well done, I would have like to have seen more of them as geography plays such a significant role in this story. Each volume contains a complete index to the entire set as well as a ten-page general bibliography.

This encyclopedia gives excellent coverage and depth to its topic. The introduction and the articles give good background, as well as detailed information on the major players, places, and events. The general and article specific bibliographies, as well as the primary documents, offer scholarly access to deeper research on this influential period of history. The Crusades: an Encyclopedia would be a worthy addition to any public or academic library.