Against the Grain

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From the Reference Desk

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From the Reference Desk

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ABC-CLIO adds another impressive set to their collection of history encyclopedias with the publication of the Encyclopedia of the Cold War: A Political, Social and Military History (2008, 978-1851097012, $495). Edited by respected scholar Spencer C. Tucker, this five-volume set consists of 1,290 entries by over 200 contributors from academic institutions worldwide. Coverage includes entries from those offering “background on World War II, such as the Allied Conferences” to those covering the “breakup of the Soviet Union and the disbandment of the Warsaw Pact” in 1991.

While the majority of articles discuss military threats and diplomatic initiatives or offer biographical sketches of major and minor players, there are also entries that touch on broad cultural topics like music and literature. In addition, there are those that address specific political events like the Profumo Affair, as well as concepts and concerns like Anti-Americanism and Arms Control. Other entries focus on individual countries and their part in the Cold War. In fact, countries like the United States, the Soviet Union, China, and Great Britain have a number of articles devoted to their involvement.

Aside from the diverse content coverage, one of the great strengths of the set is volume five which is separately edited by Priscilla Roberts and contains 171 primary source documents. But there are more than simply reprinted documents here. In each case, Roberts provides an introduction that places the document in context describing its relevance and giving the reader a real sense of the source’s historical importance.

These five volumes are attractively produced with 350 images and over 45 individual maps complimenting the text. Overall, the articles are written in an unassuming style that provides essential information in a clear and factual way. There is only one area where there could be improvement. Although there is a complete list of alphabetical entries provided, with the number and diversity of the entries, this set could benefit from a thematic index. Compensating for this somewhat are the generous use of “see also” references but a thematic index is a useful finding aid for any encyclopedia of this scope. That being said, the Encyclopedia has other helpful features including a Cold War chronology, tables providing the rank structure for selected Cold War militaries, a glossary and an additional selective bibliography.

The Encyclopedia of the Cold War: A Political, Social and Military History will take a place among top quality sets covering 20th century history and become a standard reference for Cold War research. If this set is added to their reference collections, libraries owning good single volume works like Thomas Parrish’s Cold War Encyclopedia (1996, 0-8050-2778-5, $60) published by Henry Holt and Scarecrow Press’ Historical Dictionary of the Cold War (2000, 0-8108-3709-9, $65) may want to consider transferring them to circulation.

Sage Publications has also released an important reference recently. Edited by geographer Paul Robbins from the University of Arizona, the Encyclopedia of Environment and Society (2007, 978-1-4129-2761-1, $695) is a visually impressive resource that treats an area of study that grows in importance daily. The five volumes in this set contain 1,200 concise articles by scholars from both the social and natural sciences providing a necessary interdisciplinary perspective to the set.

The actual content gives readers “a vast range of … entries including those that cover “key individuals, policies, problems, processes and theoretical concepts.” Examining a list of articles supports this diversity of topics. There are articles that deal with the specific biology and chemistry of the environment in addition to those that discuss climate and geographic formations and features. There are also entries that cover conservation and ecological issues, environmental movements and organizations, societal issues, including politics and the economy, and of course, pollution and other threats and hazards. In addition, there are articles that talk about the intersection between society and the environment in specific countries, as well as those that discuss the contributions of individual people. Each article is fact-laden but written within the context of the interplay between human activity and the environment. Such inter-
The Encyclopedia of Society and Culture in the Ancient World provides a solid foundation for further exploration. The essays on each topic draw from research in a variety of fields ranging from archaeology to art history and as such, offer a necessary multifaceted and interdisciplinary approach. Public, high school and college libraries will all want to consider adding it to their collections. Facts on File also plans a companion set entitled the Encyclopedia of Society and Culture in the Medieval World for release in late April of 2008. (978-0816069361, $360)

Libraries interested in additional sources of social and cultural history may also want to consider the Greenwood Encyclopedia of Daily Life: A Tour through History from Ancient Times to the Present (2004, 978-0313325410.) It is a six-volume set that lists for $682.95.

The Encyclopedia of American Journalism (2008, 978-0415969505, $195) is a one-volume treatment of a subject that is of increasing interest to a variety of students. Published by Routledge and edited by Stephen L. Vaughn, this work consists of 405 articles varying “in length from 500 to 5,000 words” that offer scholarly coverage American journalism reflecting its historic development, both past and present.

Individual articles cover topics ranging from journalistic practices to major publications, technological developments to influential journalists, and relevant laws and legislation to important associations and organizations. Accordingly, entries vary from those on practices like investigative reporting, feminist journalism and blogs to sketches of people ranging from Thomas Paine to Nellie Bly to Bill Moyers. Specific attention has also been paid to foreign languages, as well as ethnic newspapers. Readers will find articles on “the Chinese-American, German-American, Japanese-American, Jewish, Native American, Latino presses, and more.” Other articles treat topics as distinct as the Alien and Sedition Acts, satellite technology, the Fairness Doctrine, the FCC, Salon.Com, and Fox News.

As noted above, the coverage in this volume is diverse and fairly comprehensive, however, as the editor points out in his introduction, “special attention has been given to developments since 1945 and the end of World War II.” Those looking for comprehensive coverage of the impact of journalism during earlier periods like the Civil War may be disappointed. While deserved coverage is given to the Anti-slavery movement, and editors like Horace Greeley and newspapers like the New York Tribune, the southern press is ignored. There is no mention of the Richmond Enquirer, the Charleston Mercury or other major southern newspapers of the era. Arguably such in-depth coverage was not within the scope of the present volume but future editions might consider expanding the historical content and growing into a multi-volume set.

The Encyclopedia of American Journalism is intended for a scholarly audience and will be of particular value to undergraduates interested in 20th century American journalism. The articles provide needed background along with a thorough discussion of their topics. The Encyclopedia is text rich with few illustrations and each entry is followed by a helpful bibliography. Finding aids include both an alphabetical and thematic list of entries along with a helpful analytical index leading to content on specific pages. Academic libraries supporting journalism and communication programs will want to give it serious consideration for either reference, or circulating collections.

Rumors from page 28

com> in Against the Grain? It was v.11#6 (Dec, 1999/January 2000, p.40. Well, the update is that Martin is now Founder and CEO of Reputation Newtorks, Inc. which has small offices in Lake Merritt at 580 Grand Avenue, Suite 306, Oakland, California. His mailing address is PO Box 7775 (#54909), San Francisco, CA 94120-7775. Business details will be announced in the new year.

www.martinmanley.com>

Have gotten lots of great holiday greetings! Latest one was from Jack Montgomery who I mentioned way above, can you believe that he had time to send yours truly a birthday card! Anyway, Jack says that he is doing much better and that he had a wake up call that he does intend to heed! Hooray! You go, Jack!!! Much love from all of us!

Did I tell you that Barbara Meyers — the inventress of the great publishers’ panels and skits in Charleston — boy! Do we miss them, Barbara! Anyway, Barbara is now Barbars Meyers Ford! <bmeyersconsulting.com> We hope to see you at the 2008 Charleston Conference, Barbara! Come on down!

Got a great card from the wonderful Tove Rosado (once of the University of Connecticut) and her husband Gabriel. Tove says they have had a wonderful year traveling to Spain twice, to Costa del Sol, and to the old country, Denmark. She says in Denmark they joined a group of three old girlfriends and toured Sweden and Finland, and then St. Petersburg for five days. Gosh! It’s enough to make us all want to retire, yes? When she’s at home, Tove enjoys her garden. She says she hopes to make it to Charleston this coming year. Wouldn’t that be great!

continued on page 68