2018

Best Reference 2017

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By Mahnaz Dar, Maggie Knapp, Patricia Lothrop, Dave Pugl, Laurie Selwyn, Christine Sharbrough, & Robert Tench

ARTS & LITERATURE


Betzina, a sewing expert and host of the popular Power Sewing web series, updates her guide to fabrics, adding new selections and techniques. Readers will find 107 fabrics, listed alphabetically, from the common (cotton, wool, and silk) to the less used, such as camel hair, shearling, and rayon viscose (made out of wood pulp). Along with a visual glossary and frequent color photos, the author weaves in details on the materials that comprise each fabric and valuable information on cutting methods, threads, needles, and stitch lengths. The essential handbook for sewists of all skill levels. (LJ 9/15/17)


Sweeping in scope (from 3,000 BCE to the 20th century), this lush ode to influential books celebrates, among many others, John James Audubon’s Birds of America, Sun Tzu’s The Art of War, and Beatrix Potter’s The Tale of Peter Rabbit. Collins (Pope Francis: A Photographic Story of the People’s Pope) and several contributors place these titles in historical context, examine their authors, and provide gorgeously reproduced excerpts. While not an exhaustive guide, it’s a delightful treasure trove of classic works, bound to turn even casual browsers into ardent bibliophiles. (LJ 11/1/17)


Updating 2005’s Greenwood Companion to Shakespeare, Rosenblum offers a through look at the Bard, his plays, and his poetry. With new material such as excerpts from literary and historical sources and reviews of modern productions, this dynamic guide provides a nuanced perspective: not merely plot summaries and character de-

In this targeted, much-needed encyclopedia, Howard (communications, Rider Univ.; coeditor, Black Comics: Politics of Race and Representation) collects short biographies of creators, inkers, illustrators, designers, writers, and directors, and other African American depiction in the comic and cartoon industry. The frequent color and black-and-white illustrations add vibrancy to entries on notables such as Ta-Nehisi Coates (who worked on a Black Panther reboot) and visual cultural historian Deborah E. Whaley, among many others. (LJ 11/10/17)


For any cinephile—and who isn’t?—this meticulously researched set brings together a varied group of cinematic experts who write with aplomb about U.S. movies, actors, directors, and genres, from the early days of film to present day. Although the focus is squarely on the ways race has been depicted on the silver screen, an even larger theme is how the motion picture industry influenced how Americans viewed race. Outstanding finding aids, stimulating topics, and authoritative content make this indispensable. (LJ 11/1/17)

The Chicago Food Encyclopedia. Univ. of Illinois. 344p. ed. by Carol Mighton Haddix & others. photos. bibliog. index. ISBN 9780252087240. $34.95.

This sumptuous volume demonstrates why Chicago is widely regarded as one of the world’s major food destinations. More than 300 alphabetically arranged entries by local scholars, journalists, authors, and food industry experts cover prominent restaurants, signature dishes, and famous chefs that have influenced the city’s cuisine. An outstanding resource for those traveling to the Windy City or anyone who just relishes food.

BIOLOGY & MEDICINE


Acknowledging that breakthroughs in medicine often have grim roots, namely experimentation on human subjects, this enlightening encyclopedia highlights

GENERAL REFERENCE


Cell phones do many things well, but displaying the grandeur of planet Earth’s geography is not one of them. This oversized book features breathtaking aerial photography and updated extensive front and back matter (country summaries, world city maps, population, health and wealth statistics, and more). A remarkable way to become familiar with the countries of our world.

Library & Librarianship

oyed to a higher standard than its 2006 edition in every way, with more entries, statistical tables, and photographs. This iteration focuses on how African American businesses have developed over the last decade and the areas in which they have expanded during that time. In particular, Smith adroitly addresses the role of women and the emergence of African American businesses in global markets. (LJ 3/1/17)

Food

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Though lavishly designed, with spectacular photographs and detailed maps, this global look at beer is no frothy coffee-table book. Beer experts Hoast-Pullen and Patterson provide rich historical context and insightful commentary and pour out helpful advice (where to find the best North American festivals, how to order a pint in Germany). As practical as it is gorgeous.

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Libraries covering British or Anglo-Irish history, library science, and architecture won’t want to pass up this meticulously researched, detailed volume on country house libraries of Britain and Ireland. Examining dozens of collections and collecting habits and bibliographic treasures from Roman Britain to today, the work also serves as an example of how bibliographic essays are best written and documented. It is heavily illustrated, with images from old and rare works and of the sumptuous homes where the volumes highlighted their owners’ erudition and wealth. (LJ 2/1/18)


We love our information palaces, even as content now flows through the ether. Photographer Schiff’s astounding images, many wide-angle, showcase a range of architecturally arresting libraries around the United States. Novelist and editor Alberto Manguel’s knowledgeable essay on the history of the American library, from its elite subscription-member beginnings, adds depth. A feast for the eyes, this volume also asks us to consider the mission and cultural role of the public library. Road trip, anyone?
events such as the Tuskegee study, experiments performed by the Nazis, Timothy Leary’s work with LSD, and much more. Though it zooms back to early medical history with Hippocrates and Galen, the bulk of the volume focuses on the 19th century onward. Featuring useful primary sources and reflecting excellent research, this enthralling title shines a light on an aspect of history that has often been glossed over; lay readers and researchers alike will be captivated. (LJ 4/15/17)

HISTORY


Broadening our attention from social and artistic elites to ordinary people and providing context for the renowned art of the period (1350–1600), polymath Byrne offers concise yet detailed articles on such varied topics as non-Europeans in art, pharmacopoeias, female mystics, nutrition, painting techniques, women’s letter-writing, and much more. Students of social history and those who fantasize about being dropped into 15th-century Florence will find a reliable guidebook here. (LJ 10/1/17)


Though many of the subjects captured here for the New York Times are famous—Aretha Franklin, Rosa Parks, Ralph Ellison, Jesse Jackson—quite a few are unknown. And this book is much more than photos: there are interviews, quotations, photographer anecdotes, context-rich captions, and commentaries. A half-century of a history that has been submerged lives again.


This attractive book offers detailed maps of the 16 historically largest cities in the United States from 1800 to 1920, including New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, and Los Angeles. During this period, American cities expanded greatly owing to immigration and the arrival of a large number of erstwhile rural residents in search of jobs. Genealogists and historians will find these maps invaluable in providing details about where their ancestors lived and worked.


Joel A. Rogers’s iconic 1934 work, 100 Amazing Facts About the Negro with Complete Proof, was among the first to celebrate black history and accomplishments, but critics often found fault with the journalist’s lack of scholarship. With this loving, impeccably researched tribute, Gates rectifies that flaw, interrogating our understanding of history (“Is most of what we believe about the Underground Railroad true?”) and calling attention to examples that were previously viewable only in person, and even then, not to everyone. One such product launched in 2017, the company’s History of Mass Tourism. AMD explains that the database focuses on the “evolution of British and American working class tourism from c.1850 to 1980.” This era, noted our reviewer (ow.ly/6sjC304oyB), saw the birth of tourism as an industry. The digitized primary sources presented here largely include booklets, pamphlets, guides, maps, itineraries, and other promotional materials published by the groundbreaking British travel agency Thomas Cook. Tourism is a subject of study in itself, but the nature of this material means that it can also be used in libraries that support students of business and history. (LJ 2/1/17)

Canopy www.kanopystreaming.com

According to the 2015 SAGE white paper “Great Expectations: Students and Video in Higher Education” (ow.ly/Y3o230ih4O), “79% of students voluntarily watch videos to enhance their understanding of a topic...to learn the steps necessary to do something successfully, to understand the practical application of a theoretical concept, or to find a video that they can use during their own presentations.” Patrons in both public and academic libraries also expect easy access to videos because of the availability of Netflix and such services at home. Enter Canopy, which provides library-subscribed, on-demand stream-
ing video. Offering more than 30,000 feature films, Kanopy allows patrons to watch documentaries and international, foreign-language, and independent films from leading academic and other producers. Kanopy is not just YouTube for pay. Not only is the quality and search experience completely different, the company takes note of library purchasing practice. Among other details, our review (ow.ly/Wbs430i4oAT) explained that “libraries can purchase individual videos or collections or set up a patron driven acquisitions (PDA) profile (for higher education institutions) and cost per play for public libraries.” (LJ 10/15/17)

Oxford Research Encyclopedias
Oxford University Press
oxfordre.com
The days are gone when scholars can ignore information that is free on the web, but they still rightly prefer peer-reviewed research. Oxford University Press’s Oxford Research Encyclopedias, released in 2017, combines the best of both worlds, offering free and subscription-only information in one product. The for-pay material was reviewed in LJ last year (ow.ly/EhC30i4oCD), with our reviewer noting that while the database is suitable for experts, it will also find success with relative novices. The subjects covered are African History, American History, Asian History, Business and Management, Climate Science, Communication, Criminology and Criminal Justice, Economics, Education, Encyclopedia of Social Work (subscription required), Environmental Science, Global Public Health, Latin American History, Linguistics, Literature, Natural Hazard Science, Neuroscience, Oxford Classical Dictionary (subscription required), Planetary Science, Politics, Psychology, and Religion. (LJ 3/15/17)

ProQuest Congressional Research Digital Collection
ProQuest
www.proquest.com/libraries/academic/primary-sources/ProQuest-Congressional-Research-Digital-Collection.html
Accusations of fake news are the new “he said, she said,” but the information presented to members of Congress to aid them in their decisions—called Congressional Research Reports—remain reliable views of the decisions facing our government. These reports, explains ProQuest, are sometimes available online, but this database provides the only comprehensive collection. Since members of Congress cannot be experts on every topic that comes before them, the reports offer an impartial and thorough overview of related issues. This also makes these documents perfect for students writing reports and preparing for debates, not to mention those of us who want to be better informed but are far from Beltway policy wonks.

HONORABLE MENTION
Omnigraphics’ Health Reference Series Online
Omnigraphics omnigraphics.com
Though our reviewer noted that the search experience needed some improvement (ow.ly/9mkw30i4oGh/), Omnigraphics’s e-version of its health reference books must be given an honorable mention in this best list. It provides welcome material for public libraries, where elderly patrons in particular seek easy-to-access and reliable health information. The material from these print reference standbys also offers handy non-Wikipedia overviews for students of health and medicine who need a brush-up on the basics. (LJ 5/15/17)

The Holocaust: The Definitive Encyclopedia and Document Collection.
This concise, accessible resource stands out from other encyclopedias on the Holocaust for several reasons. It offers numerous recent survivor accounts, is incredibly up-to-date (the last comparable work was published in 2009) and easy to use, and features a uniform format. Not just for academics, this is an invaluable resource for anyone interested in human history and our potential for good and evil. (LJ 2/1/18)

The Vietnam War: The Definitive Illustrated History. DK. 360p. illus. index.
In partnership with the Smithsonian Institution, editors at DK have selected striking visuals and well-written essays on Vietnam War topics, arranged chronologically and heavily illustrated with maps, photographs, and graphics. Fifty years after the U.S. troop withdrawal, this is an engrossing look at a complex subject. Approachable for high school students, with thoughtful time lines and information of interest to all readers. (LJ 9/1/17)

LANGUAGE & LINGUISTICS
Acknowledging the importance of all forms of communication (writing, public speaking, social media, etc.), Sergy, a writer, professional speaker, public speaking coach, and LJ reviewer, answers general and practical aspects of the topic in this user-friendly guide. Via Q&A format, she explores real-world examples of the topic, such as Secretary Hillary Clinton’s use of a private email server and President Donald Trump’s reliance on social media, and, of particular note, offers a selection of 13 sample speeches and a debate, plus analyses. (LJ 5/15/17)
Religions.

An Encyclopedia of Food Culture in World Religion & Philosophy


Banks (political science, Kent State Univ.) provides a current, succinct, timely overview of the complex U.S. judicial system. Covering both the state and the federal levels in a single volume, he highlights the interplay between the two. This title also reviews the judicial system’s impact on society and politics. This excellent update to older titles such as Susan Low and Vicki C. Jackson’s Federalism: A Reference Guide to the United States tackles more recent topics, including the death of Justice Antonin Scalia, the Affordable Care Act, and same-sex marriage. (LJ 4/15/17)

SCIENCE


The geographic information system (GIS) and other advances allow us to see where animals go, whether by land (mountain lions, fishers, pythons, ants), sea (sharks, seals, otters), or air (gulls, storks, vultures, bees), not only during migrations but in mundane travels.

Technology and data have never looked more beautiful than in these 50 four-color maps and watercolor images. This astute text conveys our latest understanding of animal behavior as revealed by this sophisticated tracking.


It is impossible to look away from photographer Flach’s nearly 200 expressive, large-format images of animals whose gaze alone is a mute appeal—even without the informed commentary by zoologist Baillie. These exquisite color portraits make a compelling moral and aesthetic case for preserving the many birds, mammals, and other creatures and ecosystems under immediate threat. The poignant possibility is that some of the animals so beautifully portrayed will be preserved only in these pages.


Like humans, the class of social mammals known as cetaceans (whales, dolphins, porpoises) have large brains relative to their body size. Hoyt (research fellow, Whale and Dolphin Conservation; Creatures of the Deep), with the help of illustrations and stunning natural photographs from Brandon Cole, immerses readers in the world of these marine mammals. An excellent balance of scientific study combined with a deep concern for conservation and habitat preservation. (LJ Xpress Review 11/17/17)


Each element has its moment of glory as Jackson (Mathematics: An Illustrated History of Numbers), in conjunction with the Smithsonian and the graphic artists at DK, showcases the history, everyday uses, and sheer physical beauty of elements in the periodic table. Full-page photographs of shining metals and callout boxes with information on scientists add further interest. Providing an extra scientific kick, this gorgeous volume organizes entries not alphabetically but by molecular structure. (LJ 7/17)


DK, long known for its breathtaking
visual works, has outdone itself with this dazzling exploration of landscapes, geological marvels, and other awe-inspiring features worldwide. Through photographs that rival the likes of an IMAX film, detailed diagrams, and pithy prose, the book makes natural history accessible. The Grand Canyon, the Serengeti, and the Great Barrier Reef have never looked so good—and that’s saying something. (LJ 1/18)

Rousseau, Élise. 
Horses of the World. 
Covering every known breed of horse (including extinct wild horses), this oversize guide boasts ample photos, maps, and succinct entries. The remarkable and detailed illustrations highlight the horses’ various colors, sizes, and markings, helping with identification. Front matter includes general topics (history and domestication, coat colors, growth patterns). Excellent for browsing or answering more specific questions about traits, population statistics, and geographic distribution. (LJ 9/15/17)

SOCIAL SCIENCES


Author and historian Ueda explores the origins, developments, heritage, and traditions of the country’s ethnic and immigrant neighborhoods. He seamlessly ties these developments to contemporary U.S. society, offering a better understanding of our complex modern world. What distinguishes the work is its uncommon approach to the subject, excellent writing, and myriad useful demographics. An appendix of enclaves with the highest proportion of a particular ancestry is superb. (LJ 1/18)


This remarkable collection of essays on suburban design and development is visually pleasing and dynamic. The photographs, aerial drone shots, drawings, plans, diagrams, maps, and charts alone are enough to make the work essential, but the erudite writing and scholarly research elevate it into an even higher level of accomplishment. (LJ 11/15/17)


Presenting a general overview of the psychological effect of gender on society, entries ranging from abortion, androgyny, and anorexia to breast-feeding, Native Americans and transgender identity, nature versus nurture, and spirituality and gender concentrate on psychological issues involving gender and its role in society. The narrative chronology of psychology and gender from the mid-1800s through the early 2000s presents a fascinating view of gender psychology through the ages. (LJ 2/1/18)


Businesswomen, philanthropists, novelists, activists, fashion designers, chefs, athletes, journalists, artists, and more are featured in this work, which introduces influential persons such as primatologist Jane Goodall, author and feminist Roxane Gay, and Black Lives Matter co-founder Alicia Garza. They each respond to the same questions: what is important, what makes them happy/unhappy, what they’d change, and what one word most defines them. The portraits and interviews are fascinating and inspirational; an archive of a memorable moment in social history.

TRAVEL


Travel all over the globe—and back in time—with this survey of voyages and discovery through the ages. Lavish modern and period maps, photos, diaries and correspondence excerpts, and reproductions of ephemera galore (Viking coins, a Greek passport, the health inspection card of an immigrant to the United States) enhance compact, accessible text. Spanning ancient times to the age of flight, this delightful volume will have even the most ardent homebodies booking their next trip. (LJ 11/15/17)


Far from morbid, this fascinating travel guide may have readers planning excursions to a burial ground for champion race horses or a Viking graveyard in Norway. Rhoads (cemetary consultant, Travel & Leisure; Wish You Were Here: Adventures in Cemetery Travel) provides striking photographs and a riveting narrative of roughly 100 U.S. cemeteries (the rest are global sites). Armchair travelers will appreciate the atmospheric images of monuments and vistas, while those with a bucket list can add destinations for future exploration. (LJ 11/1/17)


Produced by the world’s largest travel guide publisher, this impressive guidebook contains entries on every country on Earth from A to Z (Afghanistan to Zimbabwe). Each chapter includes a brief country overview, the top recommended travel experiences, and information on how best to get around. The guide is supplemented with colorful maps, practical travel info, suggested itineraries, and almost 1,000 gorgeous photographs. Highly recommended for travelers trying to decide their next vacation destination and for those eager to learn more about the world overall.