The ALA choices

OUTSTANDING REFERENCE SOURCES OF 1986

A compilation of distinguished reference titles selected by the Reference Sources Committee of the ALA Reference and Adult Services Division

edited by James R. Kuhlman

As in years past, the RASD Reference Sources Committee has carefully surveyed an ever-increasing outpouring of publications to bring you the outstanding reference sources for small and medium-sized public and academic libraries. Information-laden and often lavishly illustrated, these works will entice dog lovers and pottery aficionados, open the many worlds of literature, and illuminate the mysteries of medical science. A sure standard, the Encyclopedia of the American Constitution (Macmillan) leads the class and celebrates the bicentennial of our country’s seminal legal document.

This year’s total of 37 compares to 45 last year, 44 for 1984, and an identical 37 selected for 1983. Our current choices, with a resurgence of science and technology publications, also closely follow the subject distribution of the 1983 list. In the face of heightening academic and social interest in business and computers, the humanities continue to show remarkable strength. This results, at least partly, from the appeal that quality sources in literature have to both academic and public librarians on the committee.

Several of this year’s titles will tempt young adults to new horizons in both studies and leisure activities. The Complete Book of the Dog (Holt), The Encyclopedia of U.S. Spacecraft (Exeter), The Facts on File Visual Dictionary (Facts on File), and The Stamp Atlas (Facts on File) combine information with illustration to create unique gateways to high-interest topics. Young scholars will find the first steps on the road of research eayed by the Encyclopedia of Jewish History (Facts on File), the Encyclopedia of the American Constitution (Macmillan), and Masterplots II (Salem).

The most significant trend in reference publishing remains the impact of new technologies upon reference service. The committee believes that existing and imminent developments represent fundamental change, and has again considered a variety of new sources available on CD-ROM, laser disc, and online. Although we found some meeting our standards for both outstanding quality and suitability for small and medium-sized public or academic libraries, we believe it won’t be long before they appear on our lists. Succeeding committees will continue to evaluate what is even now a rapidly growing and improving array of products.

Already, the Bureau of the Census has produced the County and City Data Book on floppy disks for use on affordable personal computers. Unfortunately, that data occupies 33 diskettes, making it considerably more trouble than it’s worth in most cases. By the time you read this, the Bureau of the Census will have evaluated the use of census data on CD-ROM. It will most likely decide to distribute portions of the 1990 Census of Population and Housing on compact discs in addition to the traditional paper and magnetic tape formats. Also, the Bureau will probably distribute the 1987 economic censuses and the Census of Agriculture on CD-ROM. At least two commercial vendors, Slater-Hall Information Products (1522 K St., N.W., Washington, DC 20005) and Market Statistics (633 3rd Ave., New York, NY 10017), are now selling census-based demographic data in combination with supporting access software. Very large and incredibly useful data collections will soon be subject to computer manipulation by means of the relatively inexpensive tandem of personal computer and compact disc reader. Machine readable data from the County and City Data Book (remember the 33 diskettes?) will consume only about three percent of one compact disc. For more information, see “Running with CD-ROM” and “Data-Power to the People” (AL, Nov. 1986, p. 754 and p. 757).
Although considerations annuals publications, they exclude pamphlets, yearbooks, and yearbooks that only appear in incomplete sets. The committee considers annuals and yearbooks for the year they first appear and new editions of monographs only if they exhibit significant revisions or changes in editorial policy. Although we noted the publication of Nicholas Slonimsky's important Supplement to Music Since 1900 (Scribner, 1986), we did not include it among the outstanding reference sources since it does not represent a change, only an extension.

We made every effort to keep the list current, but 1985 publications issued too late for careful considerations by last year's committee have been included. The committee believes that care in evaluation should not be sacrificed to speed. The International Encyclopedia of Education (Pergamon) was published relatively early in 1985, but was not available to the committee in time for the 1985 list. We want to bring it to your attention, even if somewhat late, because it is a significant publication event and has received relatively little notice in the library review media.

Members of the 1986 Reference Sources Committee are: Mary J. Miller, Akron-Summit County Public Library, Ohio; Jack O'Gorman, Wright State University Library, Dayton, Ohio; Judith B. Quinlan, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens; Ellen Derey Safley, Library, University of Texas at Dallas; Linda Sammataro, Main Library, University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Debby L. Simone, Alachua County Library District, Gainesville, Fla.; Carol M. Tobin, Princeton University Library, N.J.; Susan K. Cohen, Free Public Library, Berkeley Heights, N.J.; and serving as chair, James R. Kuhlman, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens.

The "Outstanding Reference Sources of 1986" will be displayed at the RASD booth during the ALA Annual Conference in San Francisco. Following the conference, interested groups may borrow this distinguished collection for exhibits at regional, state, or local meetings for the cost of transportation. For further information, contact Andrew Hansen, Executive Director, RASD, American Library Association, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611.


Kister's buying guides for dictionaries and other sources are well known. Best Encyclopedias, an excellent addition to the line, is designed to aid librarians and patrons who wish to consult or purchase an encyclopedia. It profiles 52 general, English-language encyclopedias and nearly 500 specialized or foreign-language encyclopedias. Each review includes basic bibliographic and descriptive information, an evaluation, a comparison with similar works, purchasing information, and a list of other reviews or sources of information. Except for a few of the older, standard works, all encyclopedias are in print. Appendices include a comparison chart for general encyclopedias, a bibliography of other books and articles on encyclopedias, and a listing of encyclopedia publishers and distributors.


Prepared with the support of the Consumer Federation of America, this author-
Finding in one chance the reader's office text. The offices tries, Clear maps and Society, The Stamp Atlas bibliography. 1986 pages car TIE words Facts Jean Claude Corbeil. to buy best The FacA will safe examplq there are abuse, charts, classics (brands) inative volume cheerfully dispenses invaluable advice (including lists of unsafe brands) on products and services for babies and preschoolers. Helpful diagrams, charts, and tables abound. Early chapters are age-group specific; later chapters cover daycare options, health, diet, travel, safety, abuse, and "everything else." Safety tips, highlighted in boxes, are given for almost every conceivable product or situation: for example, there are 16 excellent tips on the safe use of hot tubs by children. This book will be a huge help to parents in preventing needless childhood injuries, buying the best products, and saving money. Be sure to buy a circulating copy!


Things you never imagined had names, do. The fascinating Visual Dictionary's 3,000 drawings illustrating some 25,000 words will help you and your patrons discover just what they are. Pictures arranged in topical chapters that range from astronomy to gardening, from measuring devices to sports, name every part of a suit of armor and musical instruments including their placement in an orchestra. Clothing, car engines, kitchen utensils, and more are carefully drawn and labeled. The more pages you turn, the more uses you'll think of for this attractive and entertaining compendium. Valuable indexes and a selective bibliography.


Endorsed by the American Philatelic Society, The Stamp Atlas offers a unique combination of political, geographical, and historical information interwoven with maps and illustrations to present the postal and stamp histories of all the world's countries. Clear maps depict boundary changes and the chronology of stamp issues for individual countries. Openings of post offices or postal agencies are noted in the text. Colorful illustrations of stamps, post office boxes, postal workers, and marks enhance the reader's perspective of worldwide postal history. Because stamp collecting is one of the most generally popular hobbies, The Stamp Atlas will be especially welcome in public library reference collections.


For anyone not intimately acquainted with using U.S. government publications, this two-volume set is an invaluable, practical guide. It discusses basic search strategies and describes sources in detail, often reproducing sample pages to clarify the text. Volume 1 gives step-by-step guidance for known item, subject, and agency searches. Volume 2 covers statistical sources and specialized searches such as patents, legislative histories, and technical reports. Each chapter describes key sources and gives suggestions for further searching. Never before has such understandable and complete guidance been so available. A must for both depository and non-depository libraries.

Psychology and religion


Bletzer has compiled over 9,000 entries on the subject of popular occultism in a new dictionary featuring mostly brief, easily understood entries and extensive cross-referencing. A fascinating variety of information is included in seven appendices ranging from parapsychology study courses to synonyms of popular key words to a separate short dictionary of mantic arts. These simply add to the utility of this straightforward dictionary on a sometimes elusive subject. The author has studied and taught in the holistic/psychic field for more than 30 years.


The editors of this unique work define unbelief as "...not holding orthodox or traditional opinions on religious matters." This two-volume set describes the people, movements, and ideas that are or were opposed to traditional religious doctrines, including such topics as atheism, agnosticism, humanism, and rationalism. Readers will discover 203 articles mainly by prominent scholars covering unbelief in most countries and in literature as well as during major historical epochs. Biographies of leaders in the realm of unbelief such as Immanuel Kant and Julian Hibbert are a
Reference sources

A great addition. Appendixes offer researchers a useful bibliography and list meetings, organizations, publishers, and periodicals on unbelief. An excellent index rounds out this set.


Reference librarians searching for a Bible dictionary written in a nonsectarian, scholarly, yet readable and popular style need look no further. Written by 179 scholar-experts, Harper's Bible Dictionary boasts outlines of each book of the Bible including the Apocrypha, a 16-page map collection, photos, line drawings, charts, tables and other illustrations, and both pronunciations and derivations of words. The first collaborative effort of Harper & Row and the Society of Biblical Literature, a major learned society, has resulted in a must buy.


One need look no further for the ideal quick reference source of information on popes from Peter through John Paul II. Clear, concise, well-indexed, and cross-referenced, The Oxford Dictionary of Popes lists both popes and anti-popes (men claiming to be popes but not recognized as such) in one chronological list. The volume also contains an appendix on Pope Joan, the female pope of legend. Written by a respected Anglican priest and scholar, this is a valuable addition to any reference shelf.


"Kittel," the 10-volume theological tool for New Testament scholars, has been condensed into a one-volume work which may prove just as indispensable to small and medium-sized libraries as the parent volumes have to larger institutions. "Little Kittel" includes the same number of entries, greatly abridged, with Greek and Hebrew entry terms transliterated into English, making this work more usable by students lacking foreign-language skills. An excellent choice for both public and college libraries, whether or not the original is included in the reference collection.


Thoughtful perspectives on all sorts of moral questions are presented by 167 writers and theologians representing a wide diversity of religious and academic backgrounds in this expanded and greatly updated version of the 1967 standard, A Dictionary of Christian Ethics: This new work contains 620 signed entries on such timely subjects as biblical ethics, theological ethics, and a host of other topics including abortion and bioethics. Here is a valuable addition to public library as well as college reference shelves.

Social sciences


This exciting new set commemorates the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution with 2,100 signed, multidisciplinary essays on landmark judicial decisions, public acts, people, and historical periods. Entries, contributed by 262 scholars from a variety of academic backgrounds, vary in length from a brief paragraph to 6,000 words and include extensive cross-references and bibliographies when appropriate. Appendixes contain the major documents associated with our Constitution, a chronology of its adoption (1786 to 1791), a list of important events in American constitutional law, and a glossary. Case and subject indexes complete this sure standard.


Shafritz, a noted authority in the field of public administration, fills a void in most reference collections with a major tool describing the processes, terms, organizations, court cases, laws, journals, databases, and indexes important to the discipline. The alphabetically arranged and readable entries, including brief biographies for individuals who have made sig

(Continued on p. 269)
outcomes is as likely today as a decade ago. Irrational fears should be allayed by the reassuring tone of this authoritative volume containing the contributions of some 30 cancer specialists. Following the introductory overview, the 14 chapters of Part I deal with such subjects as new treatments, prevention, living with cancer, and false remedies. Each of the 20 readable chapters in Part II details prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of a specific type of cancer. A Directory of Resources, glossary, and index are also included. This is a perfect over-the-reference-counter treatment for cancerophobia. Plan to purchase an extra copy to circulate.


We usually don't think of the foods we eat in terms of their pharmaceutical effects, but this guide highlights the important interactions of foods and drugs. Writing for the layperson, Dr. Morgan of Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons lists the possible side effects, nutritional interactions, and high risk groups for about 300 generic drugs. Nutritional information covers vitamin and mineral deficiencies that the foods and drugs may cause as well as other potential problems, such as hyperension. Both prescription and over-the-counter products are indexed by brand name. A useful supplement for any collection owning the Physician's Desk Reference.


Anyone with a question related to health or disease will appreciate this comprehensive, illustrated guidebook produced by 56 physician specialists. The eight sections include an overview of the American health care system, first aid, sexual and reproductive health, lifestyle issues, drugs, resources for the disabled, and the language of medicine. The heart of the book is the 20-chapter section on diagnosis, treatment, and, especially, prevention of diseases and disorders. This volume is packed with good advice on dealing with the medical establishment as well as clear explanations of diagnostic procedures and both normal and abnormal bodily functions. A list of poison control centers, guide to keeping medical records, index, and atlas of major organ systems are included. For all libraries.

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Keeping up with the language of the '80's

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This drawing of a Saint Bernard is among several by Tony Lodge appearing in The Complete Book of the Dog (copyright 1985 by the Rainbird Publishing Group Ltd.). Reprinted with permission of publisher Henry Holt and Company.


This is an affectionate collection of both historic and practical information on people's best friend. Attractive and informative drawings illustrate most chapters, which cover evolution, genetics, guide and police dogs, racing dogs, choosing and caring for a pet, behavior, anatomy, and health and fitness. A final section on pedigree breeds includes 30 color photographs followed by a catalog of all breeds listed by the British or American kennel clubs (plus additional rare and European breeds) with their history, characteristics, temperament, and drawbacks. A glossary and index to both text and illustrations close this fine volume. An additional copy for circulation will be needed to satisfy dog lovers in both academic and public libraries.


Did you know that a banana jack is a convenient single-lead connector used only in low-voltage applications? To find clear, concise, and jargon-free explanations of such electrical, electronics, and communication technology terms, look no further than this comprehensive one-volume encyclopedia. A categorized list groups all articles under 17 general headings including mathematical data, physical data, and miscellaneous terminology. A table of standard schematic symbols precedes over 3,000 alphabetically arranged entries. Colorful diagrams and cross-references are provided throughout, and there is a thorough index to articles, illustrations, and tables. Since no technical background is assumed, this title will be useful in high school as well as college and public libraries.


Handsomebly illustrated with color photos and diagrams, this attractive guide will transport earthbound library patrons to the heights of America's space adventure. Alphabetically arranged lists of NASA, commercial, and military space flights with descriptions of the launch vehicle, dates of flights, crews, and summaries of the flight's accomplishments include all known U.S. missions, even those that failed to achieve orbit. Flights with crews, such as Gemini and Apollo, and important non-crowed operations are discussed in detail; military missions receive less attention. Includes appendixes on Skylab, launch vehicles, and acronyms. An exciting addition to school, public, and academic collections.


Workers, hobbyists, and home builders will discover more than 13,000 brief, non-technical definitions in this valuable new guide to the specialized and changing vocabulary of the construction industry. Black-and-white sketches, abbreviations at the beginning of each letter, and the inclusion of some slang and regionalisms add to an already useful package. A must for libraries serving either professionals or the weekend putterer.


Recent and almost overwhelming increases in scientific research have produced a wealth of terms known only to experts in increasingly specialized fields. This one-volume dictionary goes a long way toward alleviating the problems of terminology in natural history with short, clear definitions for the earth and atmospheric sciences, botany, geology, and zoology. Entries are arranged by scientific term with cross-references from common names. Public and academic collections will find Allaby's work particularly useful for students, amateur naturalists, and scholars working outside their discipline.
Reference sources


Reference librarians, students, and collectors of pottery and porcelain will hail the arrival of this international encyclopedia. Schools, companies, factories, designers, decorators, and pottery and porcelain techniques are clearly explained within a historical perspective. Entries vary in length but most are a paragraph or two followed by bibliographical references. Readers will discover not only coverage of such familiar topics as the ceramic sculpture of American Edward Boem, but also a focus on international subjects that include Japanese and Bulgarian ceramics. An excellent selection of mostly black-and-white illustrations of maker or factory marks and photographs of representative pottery and porcelain pieces enhance the usefulness and attractiveness of this encyclopedia.


The Grove name represents quality reference publications. Its latest reference work proves to be no exception. This four-volume set covers the entire American music scene from its very beginnings to the present. The extent of wide-ranging coverage can only be realized by examining all the volumes, but the following sampling may help. Virgil Thomson, Neil Young, Roy Rogers, and Isaac Stern are examples of composers, conductors, and performers included; instrument companies such as Steinway and Wurlitzer; musical themes such as Western swing, work songs, and women in music; and cities ranging from New York to Rochester, New York, are described in the context of American musical relationships. Extensive bibliographies, discographies, and repositories of manuscript materials expand the volume. A must purchase for all that can afford it.

History & genealogy


A boon for both genealogists and historians, Filby's work provides a detailed listing of published county histories for the entire United States with the exceptions of Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. The over 5,000 entries are arranged by state, then alphabetically by county, and provide full bibliographic information including reprints, if available. With the help of librarians in each state and state bibliographies, Filby was able, in most cases, to double the number of county histories listed by the Library of Congress and the New York Public Library for that state. Includes some regional histories.


With a hundred historical entries and a dozen appendices, this beautifully illustrated work traces Jewish history from ancient times to the present day. Prepared by Israeli scholars, the chronologically arranged book permits both browsing and, through the use of its detailed index, ready reference use. The many maps, glossary, chronology, and the indexed illustrations provide additional pieces of information that make this truly a one-volume encyclopedia perfectly suited for smaller as well as larger libraries.

Language & literature


Libraries serving research interests in women's studies or literature will welcome this contribution to the scholarship of female literary history. Each of the 500 entries on both major and minor women writers provides biographical information, a list of all or most of the author's works, a statement of themes and genres, and a short assessment of the writer's contribution. Although some of the more prominent women have been treated in standard sources such as the Dictionary of National Biography and Dictionary of American Biography, researchers will benefit from these
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The Master Index to Summaries of Children's Books simplifies access to the hundreds of children's books published each year by locating summaries of more than 18,000 fiction and nonfiction titles for children in preschool through sixth grade. Standard resources such as Huck's Children's Literature in the Elementary School and Larrick's A Parent's Guide to Children's Reading are among the 86 "...bibliographies, children's literature textbooks, and books of activities based on children's books..." published from 1974 through 1980 that are indexed. Entries in volume I are arranged alphabetically by author, then title, and provide basic bibliographic information and grade level as well as the location of summaries. Volume 2 is a title and detailed subject index. A unique source of particular importance to librarians who compile subject-oriented booklists and to students and professionals in the children's literature field.


Anyone who has relied on the original (1949) series will welcome the new titles in Masterplots II. Reflecting the "...changes in the social structure of American society ..." 363 essays focus on 383 popular works of American fiction written by nearly 200 authors between 1900 and 1985. Title selection reflects special effort to represent women, black, and Latin American authors who are either widely read or who have recently received acclaim. Each article contains a plot summary and a discussion of the work's critical reception. New features include exploration of themes, meanings, characterization, and sources for further study. Whether seeking information on The Color Purple, Cat's Cradle, or One Hundred Years of Solitude, patrons in all libraries will find this set essential.


If "indispensable" has become a term associated with the Oxford companions, then the Oxford Companion to Australian Literature follows closely in that tradition. More than 3,000 entries on writers of poetry, fiction, drama, and nonfiction and on significant historical events that shaped this literature reveal the culture of Australia. Special topics like Australian English, war literature, and folk songs are developed thoroughly, while other entries include persons like Errol Flynn and Zane Grey who touched Australia, each in his or her own way. Brief summaries of individual works and explanations of terms like "bilabong" add to our understanding of Australian life. With all the recent interest in our neighbors "down under," this companion is a must for most public and academic libraries.

Drabble has masterfully revised the 4th edition of the standard Oxford Companion to English Literature to retain all the best elements of the original: "...English authors, literary works and literary societies which have historical or present importance." To this base, she has added many modern authors of recent attention, and documents the influence of artistic and intellectual movements on English literature. Even the smallest libraries will benefit from the some 3,000 biographical sketches and the balanced treatment of popular genres like detective fiction.


Science fiction and fantasy buffs of all ages can celebrate at last! Determining the order of titles in a series in these two specialized genres has never been easier. Entries are arranged alphabetically by author, or by overall series title (like Conan) if several authors have contributed. Each sequence is listed by title followed by individual works with year of publication (1700–1985) and publisher. Sequence and book title indexes complete this work. Essential for librarians who do reader’s advisory, interlibrary loans, or collection development and for patrons seeking that elusive title in the Magic of Xanth series or more books in the Dark is Rising sequence.


Are you suffering from writer’s block? Do you need to select a literary agent? Or perhaps you are trying to adapt to using a personal computer for word processing? Then, The Writer’s Advisor should be your one-stop guide to all facets of a writer’s needs. Four thousand titles in 34 categories form this extremely useful reference bibliography which covers all genres from poetry writing to historical novels. The annotated list of books and periodical articles carries the writer through the entire writing process from literary techniques to marketing strategies. The titles selected represent advice from experts in their respective fields. All types of libraries will find this source in heavy demand by both novice and experienced authors.