

Reference Books

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Editor

Encyclopedia of American Business History. By Charles R. Geisst. Facts On File Library of American History. New York: Facts On File, 2006. 2 vols. acid free \$125 (ISBN 0-8160-4350-7).

The *Encyclopedia of American Business History* consists of approximately 350 well-illustrated entries in two slim volumes. There are articles on various industries and companies, many biographical entries, and articles on business concepts and trends, some of them uniquely American. Laws and institutions that have had an impact on business are also featured. Each entry is followed by a brief bibliography and references to related articles; there is also a general bibliography. The entries are followed in the second volume by a chronology and selected primary documents, which range from the “Hudson’s Bay Company Charter, 1670” to “*United States versus Microsoft*, 2000.” The intent of the encyclopedia, according to the introduction, is to respond to the growth of business history as a discipline and to cover recent business history from the turbulent 1990s.

There is a strong emphasis on biography, perhaps harking back to an earlier encyclopedic series put out by this publisher, though the biographical articles in the current source are more abbreviated. The industry articles are a helpful introduction to each industry, though several industries are neglected—for example, there is no apparel industry article, nor any for the healthcare, food and beverage, or tobacco industries. And the industries themselves are treated differently—the article on the sports industry is more than five pages long, whereas the steel industry entry is less than two pages long.

Alphabetization is the less-used letter-by-letter system, rather than word-by-word, so that the article “banknotes” is followed by “Bank of America,” and the later “Bank of United States” is followed by “bankruptcy.” Somewhat confusing, unless you think telephone directories are models of clarity; at any rate, one needs awareness of the method in order to find articles.

There is nothing else quite like this reference source at this time. An earlier eight-volume series put out by the same publisher, *Encyclopedia of American Business History and Biography* (Facts On File, 1989–1994), focuses on a few industries only (railroads, automobiles, airlines, iron and steel, and banking and finance) and the articles are primarily on important people and companies. Each volume is on a different industry (some industries merited two volumes, covering different time periods), with a substantial introduction to the industry as a whole, and biographical articles give extensive information on their subjects. This earlier work covers American business history (at least in those particular industries) in much more depth than the current encyclopedia and is

certainly not replaced by it. Other encyclopedias of business do not have the direct emphasis on the history of American business. An example is *Encyclopedia of American Business*, edited by W. Davis Folsom (Facts On File, 2004). This source has more than double the number of articles, though virtually no illustrations. It treats business concepts, organizations, and relevant laws and agencies, but with little focus on history. It lacks biographical, company, and industry articles (though the index refers to people, companies, and industries mentioned in the articles). Other sources do treat American business history, but only in a much narrower context, such as the *Encyclopedia of African American Business History*, edited by Juliet Walker (Greenwood, 1999) and Jennette Oppedisano’s *Historical Encyclopedia of American Women Entrepreneurs: 1776 to the Present* (Greenwood, 2000).

Overall, the encyclopedia is a good introduction to American business history, and its bibliographical references lead readers to fuller treatments of each topic. It is quite readable, easily living up to its own reading-level evaluation of “grade 9 and up.” Recommended, particularly for school and public libraries.—*Judith Faust, Business Librarian, California State University—East Bay, Hayward*

Encyclopedia of Anthropology. Ed. by H. James Birx. London: Sage, 2006. 5 vols. acid free \$450 (ISBN 0-7619-3029-9).

Edited by H. James Birx, a frequent contributor to *Library Journal*, *Encyclopedia of Anthropology* presents in one resource a wide-ranging variety of articles on topics in the field of anthropology. Included in the five-volume set are more than one thousand entries by more than 250 scholars, encompassing the four traditional areas of anthropological inquiry—physical anthropology, cultural anthropology, archaeology, and linguistics—as well as relevant articles in the areas of geology, biology, paleontology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, and theology. Although many excellent resources in anthropology are currently available, such as *Encyclopedia of Human Evolution and Prehistory* (Garland, 2000), *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology* (Routledge, 1996), and *Encyclopedia of Archaeology* (ABC-CLIO, 1999–2001), these works concentrate on a single area or aspect of the discipline. *Encyclopedia of Anthropology* is the first attempt at a survey of the entire field of anthropology and its related disciplines in one resource, and as such, it does an admirable job.

The volumes themselves are well presented, with an identical “Chronology,” “List of Entries,” and “Reader’s Guide” in the front, and an index covering the entire set in the back of each volume. Entries are arranged alphabetically, and are written in clear, understandable, and relatively jargon-free language, making this a good resource for high school and undergraduate students as well as interested nonspecialists. Most entries contain numerous cross references to related topics in the *Encyclopedia* and include a well-demarcated section of “Further Readings” at the end of each signed article. Additional or supplementary information accompanies some topics and is clearly set off from the main body of the text. The