

vative. Most contributors are philosophers, although work was also commissioned from scholars in other fields. Soble describes the encyclopedia as “eclectic,” a term that perhaps does a disservice to the work. As any resource covering an interdisciplinary field should do, the encyclopedia reveals connections between theology, science, law, philosophy, psychology, medicine, and social science without losing focus of what could be an unwieldy subject.

All entries contain in-text citations to material listed in the references section that follows each entry. In-text citations to books include specific information, such as page, section, or paragraph numbers to aid readers in finding the relevant passages referred to. In addition to the references section, each entry is followed by additional reading lists compiled by the editor that include extensive citations to related materials. These bibliographies often contain duplication, an advantage to readers who browse the work selectively rather than reading the entire encyclopedia. Cross references to other entries are indicated by boldface type within the text. The “Guide to Related Topics” is a useful feature that groups entries together under twenty-two common headings, such as “Analytic Philosophy,” “Catholicism, Roman,” and “Medicine.” The second volume concludes with a selected general bibliography that, combined with a list of works in the abbreviations section, constitute a core list of literature in the field, convenient for librarians and faculty.

Soble notes in his introduction that the philosophy of sex as an academic pursuit can be said to have blossomed in 1969 with the publication of *Sexual Perversion* by Thomas Nagel, who applied analytic philosophy to sexual matters. Since then, several historical records of academic writing have been published. For example, Igor Primoratz’s *Human Sexuality* (Ashgate, 1997) reprints important journal articles published in the late twentieth century; Soble’s *Sex, Love, and Friendship* (Rodopi, 1997) collects essays prepared for the Society for the Philosophy of Sex and Love from 1977 to 1992. *Sex from Plato to Paglia: A Philosophical Encyclopedia* differs from these in that it integrates and presents the scholarship in such a way as to provide both a reference source and a unique compendium to the field that can easily be used as a primer, one that is destined to become a classic.—Lisa Roberts, *Cataloger, California State University, Sacramento*

Shaping of America, 1783–1815, Reference Library. By Richard C. Hanes, Sharon M. Hanes, and Kelly Rudd. Ed. by Lawrence W. Baker. Detroit, Mich.: Thomson Gale, 2006. 4 vols. acid free \$215 (ISBN 1-4144-0181-7).

If the goal of reference books for younger readers is to spark their interest, *Shaping of America: 1783–1815* should far exceed that goal. Juvenile works for this time period are generally either fairly brief (for example, Stephen Feinstein’s *Rise of a New Nation: The Chronicle of American History from 1787 to 1815* [Bluewood Bks., 2000] and Isaac Asimov’s *The Birth of the United States, 1763–1816* [Dennis Dobson, 1974]) or concentrate on a single person (for example, James Giblin’s

The Amazing Life of Benjamin Franklin [Scholastic Pr., 2000]). An exception is *America Speaks: The Birth of a Nation* (Grolier, 2005), which in ten slim volumes examines the time period through various trades and occupations, such as *Merchants* (vol. 1), *Transporters* (vol. 4) or *Lawmen* (vol. 8). *America Speaks* seems to be aimed at audiences that are a bit younger. *Shaping of America* combines well-written and in-depth coverage of the era with rather detailed biographies and a separate volume of primary sources, offering more than one thousand pages on the subject.

Shaping of America has four volumes: *Almanac*, *Biographies* (2 volumes), and *Primary Sources*. Each volume begins with a seven-page introduction that sets the stage for the early 1780s in American history. An explanation about the Articles of Confederation is provided, along with a description of frontier life and what the frontier was in this time period. This is a good starting point for students, who may not be entirely certain about the differences between the Articles of Confederation and the U.S. Constitution, for example. The individual volumes offer a reader’s guide, explaining what is covered in the particular volume, and then a timeline of events. The timeline is nearly identical for each volume, although that for *Biographies* is adjusted to highlight events concerning the lives covered in *Biographies*. For example, in both the *Almanac* and *Biographies*, May 10, 1775, is included in the timeline as the date for the convening of the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia. The *Biographies* goes on to include March 31, 1776, as when “Future first lady Abigail Adams writes a letter to husband John Adams (the future second president), asking him to ‘remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than [were] your ancestors’” (xx). Names of people that are included in *Biographies* appear in bold type. Also included in each volume is the section “Words to Know,” which provides brief definitions of terms that may be unfamiliar to twenty-first century students. A detailed index rounds out each volume.

The fifteen chapters of the *Almanac* volume begin by providing background on the “Colonial Foundation” and then on the “Confederation.” Other chapters include “A New Government, 1789–1793,” “A Farming Society,” and “Slavery, Free Blacks, and Native Americans.” Sidebars with further information appear throughout. Interesting illustrations from primary sources are used to good advantage throughout the *Almanac* and the other volumes. “Where to Learn More” is a nine-page compilation of the additional readings and Web sites given at the end of each chapter, which conveniently puts all of these resources together and gives students, parents, and teachers a substantial list of additional materials. The *Almanac* also offers “Research and Activity Ideas,” a section for teachers and parents that encourages further exploration of the topics covered, such as “Comparison of Constitutions,” “Developing a Capital City,” and “Free Black Communities.”

Primary Sources introduces young scholars to the excitement of using primary documents in their research. Eighteen historical documents are excerpted, ranging from *The Alien and Sedition Acts* to the diary of Martha Ballard, a Maine

SOURCES

midwife and diarist who wrote from 1785 until her death in 1812. What makes these excerpts of greater value is additional background information on the topic, and for some entries, an epilogue (“What Happened Next”) and a final section entitled “Did You Know?”

Tying the set together are the two volumes of *Biographies*, which feature people who have appeared in the other volumes as major players or lesser-known figures, such as Benjamin Banneker, a free black who wrote to Thomas Jefferson in 1791 requesting freedom for slaves. Banneker’s letter and Jefferson’s response both appear in *Primary Sources*. The fifty entries in *Biographies* run to nearly ten pages each and it is encouraging that the coverage extends beyond powerful white men to include Native Americans, African Americans, and women.

Finally, as part of the complete set, a cumulative index is included. A minor quibble is that, although illustrations are listed in the index, it would have been helpful to have the illustrations listed separately from the rest of the material.

This set is highly recommended for public and school libraries, and for the homeschooled. The reading level is aimed at middle and senior high school students, but it would not be beyond the capabilities of upper elementary school students.—*Carla Wilson Buss, Curriculum Materials and Education Librarian, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens*

The Skinny About Best Boys, Dollies, Green Rooms, Leads, and Other Media Lingo. By Richard Weiner. New York: Random, 2006. 289p. acid free \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0-375-72141-9).

This work fulfills its promise of defining terms from theater, film, broadcasting, and journalism. However, the format is not what one would expect in a reference work. Weiner exchanges lexical format for a free-flowing discussion that is dense with definitions, etymology, and interesting asides. Media terms appear in italics within the paragraphs, rather than appearing as separate entries in bold face.

The discussion centers on chapter themes such as “Broadcasting” and “Theatre,” as one might expect. Other chapter themes such as “Body Parts,” “Colors,” and “Geography” reflect a new and creative way to organize the terms. These chapter titles are not to be taken literally. For example, the chapter “Body Parts” defines terms such as “headline,” “face margin,” and “handwringing.” The chapter on “Geography” is really about metonyms. The chapter subtitles reveal just how tongue-in-cheek this book really is. They include phrases such as “Not just for couch potatoes,” “From peewees to brutes,” and “Gibberish and thingamajigs.” Clearly, Weiner intends for his book to entertain as much as it informs.

Weiner admits that the starting point in his research for this book was his work on *Webster’s New World Dictionary of Media and Communications* (Macmillan, 1996). However, this work is not a replacement for the previous reference work. The straightforward, lexical approach of the earlier work still makes it a superior reference source. That said, the very thorough index in the new work makes it accessible, even useful as a media glossary. It just does not look like a glossary.

This is a book one would read in chapter-sized chunks. It does not quite read like a standard nonfiction book, nor would one normally use it like a dictionary. *The Skinny* provides high-quality browsing material. It will appeal to trivia hounds and the generally curious in addition to those wishing to learn the jargon of communications industries. It is pure linguistic fun.

The volume itself is a tall, narrow paperback—perhaps a play on the word “skinny” in the title—yet attractive and comfortable to handle. The text is quite readable, but it moves fast, like free association. Academic, public, and secondary school libraries would gladly collect this book. However, it defies easy classification as either a reference book or a circulating book.—*Steven R. Edscorn, Library Director, Memphis Theological Seminary, Tennessee*

Social Issues in America: An Encyclopedia. Ed. by James Ciment. Armonk, New York: Sharpe, 2006. 8 vols. acid free \$499 (ISBN 0-7656-8061-0).

This eight-volume reference set contains entries on more than 150 major issues facing American society in the twenty-first century, ranging from economic and scientific to social and political. Written by scholars in various fields, entries include historical background as well as analyses of current aspects of the issue. Entries also include bibliographies (including Web sites), chronologies, glossaries, tables, and primary source documents. Each volume includes a topic finder that organizes all of the major issues by subject headings. Also included in each volume is a cross-reference index. Finally, the eighth volume is a thorough subject index, making this series a well-structured reference tool.

The content of the encyclopedia is outstanding and a pleasure to read. Entries are not as comprehensive as the Contemporary World Issues series of books published by ABC-CLIO, but they do pack a tremendous amount of information into a small number of pages. This condensed format may be more manageable and not as overwhelming for the first-year composition student.

Social Issues in America is an excellent reference tool but would not be a necessary purchase for a library that subscribes to Gale’s *Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center* database, which contains hundreds of reference books, periodical articles, primary source documents, statistics, multimedia, and Web sites on today’s major issues. As an electronic resource, the *Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center* is much more appealing and convenient to the user.

Although there are many reference materials and databases covering controversial issues in the United States, *Social Issues in America* provides the substance of an issue in an efficient and thought-provoking way. Recommended on an elective basis for academic collections and large public libraries.—*Colleen Lougen, Electronic Resources Librarian, State University of New York, New Paltz*