

retrieval, there are reasons to have some statistical information in hard copy. Static time-delimited information in a portable, easy-to-browse format has its uses. One can use a search engine to find “black women voting 2004” and get more than 900,000 hits; or use the index in a volume like this and know that tables 4.04–4.15 have voter characteristics. There are many fewer pages to search and the search results are often more precise.

As one would expect, the sources for the tables are U.S. governmental agencies and their divisions: Bureau of the Census, Health and Human Services, Department of Justice, Department of Labor, and Department of Education. The 239 tables are divided into eight chapters: demographics and social characteristics; vital statistics and health; education; government and elections; law enforcement and corrections; labor, employment, and unemployment; earnings, income, poverty, and wealth; and special topics. The special topics include such things as social security benefits, and farm and industry information. Most of the information can be found in the densely packed *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (U.S. G.P.O., 1879–present). But library users often prefer to have information about demographic or ethnic groups available in easily accessible and understandable formats.

Each table deals with one issue, comparing black, white, and usually all races nationally on that characteristic. The number of bachelor's degrees conferred and the median family income by state are examples. Some are “black only,” such as the number of elected public officials by type for selected years. The glossary explains the specific meanings of the terms in titles and by agencies, and the index directs users to all tables related to a word or concept.

First published in 1990, this reference work offers a less expensive, analogous continuation to the *Statistical Record of Black America*, last published by Gale Research in 1999. Though not widely held, libraries fielding U.S. demographic, race-based questions should consider this and its companion volumes on Asian and Hispanic citizens from this publisher. Academic libraries serving social work, nursing, criminal justice, sociology, and related majors should find uses for this book.—Linda L. Scarth, *Reference Librarian, Mount Mercy College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa*

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***British and Irish Poets: A Biographical Dictionary, 449–2006.*** Comp. by William Stewart. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2007. 503p. alkaline \$125 (ISBN 978-0-7864-2891-5).

The author of this ambitious biographical dictionary spanning 1,557 years believes that the “cultural, national, social, economic, religious and military history” (xi) of Britain and Ireland can be fully realized by understanding the countries' poets and their work. There are no poems or verses of poetry in this book; this is not an anthology. The point is to give a literary, historical perspective on the countries' poets through brief, pertinent information about them and to provide lists of significant works to stimulate further interest and study.

The alphabetically arranged main part of the book outlines each poet-author with a separate, one-paragraph biographical entry and a partial list of published works. The poet's name, along with her or his birth and death years (if death has occurred) makes up each heading. The “Sources” section is a bibliography in paragraph form directly following each biographical entry.

The author used a range of resources in researching this book, including high-quality, subscription electronic databases and print resources such as *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* (6th ed., Oxford Univ. Pr.). Conversely, I was surprised at the author's use of the British version of Wikipedia as a source because of possible inaccuracies.

The back-of-the-book material in biographical reference books should make it easy to search beyond just the person's name, and *British and Irish Poets* does a strong job in this regard. The index is very thorough, referencing places, periodicals, and terms associated with the poets. “Timeline of British and Irish Poets” and “Poets by Nation” are also helpful. But the bibliography is weak. It is an overall alphabetical compilation of titles from each “Sources” entry in the book. The individual “Sources” sections after each entry are sufficient.

This book does fill a gap in the existing literature. A review of similar works shows no other book with this wide scope of time and focus on the poets. Other books focus on the countries' poetry and more specific periods of time. Two examples are *Poetry and Revolution: An Anthology of British and Irish Verse, 1625–1660* by Peter Davidson (Oxford Univ. Pr., 2001) and *The Oxford Handbook of British and Irish War Poetry* by Tim Kendall (Oxford Univ. Pr., 2007).

A major challenge with this type of work is avoiding duplication of information already in electronic format. A search on poet Robert Burns in Thomson Gale's Literature Resource Center found a very comparable, slightly longer biography. The lists of published works in this book are not comprehensive for more prolific authors. For example, Gale's Literary Index provided a fuller list of works by Elizabeth Barrett Browning than is provided in this book.

Purchase of this book would have to be justified by curriculum demands in a high school or college. Much of the information in this book is already in literary subscription databases, often more comprehensively stated but in a scattered way; students need to know what they are looking for when searching databases. The book effectively brings together information about one broad topic, encouraging serendipitous browsing and discoveries during the research process and an understanding of the overall history of Britain and Ireland.—Theresa Kelly Darr, *Library Director, Loyola Blakefield, Towson, Maryland*

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***Cities of the Middle East and North Africa: A Historical Encyclopedia.*** Ed. by Michael R. T. Dumper and Bruce E. Stanley. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2007. 439p. alkaline \$95 (ISBN 1-57607-919-8).

Cities with names such as Doha, Gaza, Najaf, Karbala,

## SOURCES

Khartoum, and Mogadishu have joined other well-known cities such as Beirut, Cairo, Damascus, Jerusalem, Baghdad, and Tehran in becoming commonplace in news stories. Upon hearing such names, many individuals realize they are uninformed about the location, significance, and history of these important cities. This new reference work seeks to fill that information void. The editors have produced a one-volume encyclopedia that provides entries on one hundred cities, both historical and contemporary, located in the Middle East and North Africa. Thus historically significant cities that are now only archaeological sites, such as Babylon, Byblos, Ephesus, Nineveh, Ugarit, and Ur, as well as thriving metropolises that are not well known in the western world, such as Baku, Bursa, Esfahan, Fez, Nouakchott, and Zanzibar, are included. Some cities are smaller, while others have populations in the millions. Each is unique in some fashion. As Bruce Stanley says in his introduction, “one of the realizations that emerges from reading all these entries is that each city has a fascinating story to tell, and its trajectory is just as interesting as that of its neighbor” (xxv).

Each individually authored entry provides the most recent estimate of population; a very brief summary of the article; a longer (often several pages in length) discussion of the city that focuses on the history of the city and its cultural and economic importance; and a short bibliography. Nineteen contributors have written the entries, but little information is given about their expertise. Most are affiliated with universities in the United Kingdom, while others hail from France, the United States, and the Middle East. The entries are well written and informative. A glossary defines a variety of terms, predominantly from Arabic. Four timelines of dynastic and imperial ages help provide contextual information on the region. The index, while serviceable, would have been more effective with additional cross references. For example, there is no “see” reference from the English spelling “Mecca” to the entry for “Makkah.”

Other reference works, such as *Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa* (Macmillan, 2004) or *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* (Oxford Univ. Pr., 1995) have entries for major cities, but the work under review provides greater depth and includes far more individual cities. For academic libraries that support programs on the Islamic world and especially on the Middle East and Africa, this will be a welcome addition to their reference collections.—Gregory A. Crawford, Director, Penn State Harrisburg Library, Middletown, Pennsylvania

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***Encyclopedia of American Indian History.*** Ed. by Bruce Johansen and Barry Pritzker. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2007. 4 vols. acid-free \$395 (ISBN 978-1-85109-817-0).

On reading the title of this work, one immediately asks, “What is the geographical definition of ‘American?’” The introductory material does little to satisfy this curiosity; it is only with a perusal of the cumulative index that one concludes Native American refers to Canadian, U.S. (including

Alaska), and some Mexican affiliated native peoples. Although major South American native groups such as Aztecs, Incas, and Mayans are mentioned, they are included only in relation to North American native tribes and nations. Similarly, the encyclopedia’s covered time-period is inferred (20,000 B.C.–2006) from the titles in the “Chronological Essays” section, but is not specifically stated.

*Encyclopedia of American Indian History’s* introduction contextualizes the work in a historiographical framework. The editors’ stated goal of “redress[ing] assumptions that any single culture is superior to any other” (xiv) through the selection of both Native and non-Native authors lends this work a noble purpose. But the overly complex organization is a serious drawback. Indeed, the editors comment on the difficulty of selecting an organization scheme that works for all audiences. The four-volume work is arranged in a three-tiered hierarchical structure. It is not until the third level that users encounter what is typically expected in an encyclopedia, an alphabetical list of topical entries. This organizational method may have been an attempt to present readers with topics in a manner resembling the current historiographical themes in Native American research, including hot topics in many university-level ethnography and anthropology courses. Typical users will instead find themselves moderately confused.

On the plus side, the cumulative index of all volumes is present in every volume rather than just the last. This arrangement allows multiple users to begin researching topics simultaneously, enhancing this work’s potential usefulness in the college classroom. An especially useful and time-saving feature of the index is bolded page numbers indicating a primary entry for the referenced topic. There are a generous number of black-and-white images throughout and the “Resources” section includes a directory of U. S. and Canadian tribal organizations and statistical data, such as population by tribe and poverty level.

Another weakness is the lack of consistency among topical entries and essays. The “Primary Resources” section lacks cross references, leaving the connection of primary resources to scholarly commentary up to the user.

Reference works on Native American topics abound. One of the editors of the reviewed work, Barry M. Pritzker, authored *A Native American Encyclopedia* (Oxford Univ. Pr., 2000). In fact, the section “Indian Nation Histories” in the reviewed work is essentially an edited reprint of that work. Editor Fredrick E. Hoxie’s *Encyclopedia of North American Indians* (Houghton Mifflin, 1996), though a bit outdated, provides similar information in a far more user-friendly manner. Those looking for tribe-specific histories, including easy comparison of one tribe to another, are better served by *UXL Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes*, edited by Sharon Malinowski, Anna Sheets, and Linda Schmittroth (UXL, 1999). *American Indian History*, edited by Carole A. Barrett (Salem, 2003), while also better organized than the reviewed work, is geared towards a beginning level researcher.

If an academic, public, or special library’s Native American reference sources are lacking or if the library has a focused