

SOURCES

After a detailed table of contents that lists each statistical table, the 185 tables are organized into eight chapters. These cover demographics and social characteristics; vital statistics and health; education; government and elections; crime, law enforcement and corrections; labor employment and unemployment; earnings, income, poverty and wealth; and special topics such as Asian-owned firms, consumer expenditures, and mobility. Each table concludes with the name of the source, including the URL if applicable, table number in the source, and unit of measure. The introduction notes that the user should pay particular attention to these notes and unit measures. Most of the data are from 2006 and before, although the table counting prisoners under sentence of death is a 2007 number. There are also population projections to 2010, projected fertility rates to 2010, and projections of labor force participation to 2012. Most of the tables compare numbers of white Americans with those of the Asian populations. Some of the tables count each ethnic group within the Asian American population but these are rare.

A fourteen page glossary and a seven page index conclude the book. The glossary offers lengthy and precise definitions of the specialized terms used by the government when taking statistics. There are also many “see” references, which help the user find explanations of precise pieces of data. The index points to table numbers rather than page numbers and tends to use general words such as “children” or “cancer” with several subheadings following.

This volume should be very useful as a ready reference source. Although every statistic in here can be found through a search in census and agency online databases, this would be handy for libraries that often need statistics on Asian Americans. The glossary itself is very helpful because of its precise definitions of exactly what is being counted. The price (\$79), is reasonable enough, although those librarians adept at searching government publications online will probably not wish to buy it. A search of WorldCat did not find other books like this one.—*Carol Krismann, Head, William M. White Business Library, University of Colorado, Boulder*

Black American Military Leaders: A Biographical Dictionary. By Walter L. Hawkins. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2007. 559p. alkaline \$95 (ISBN 978-0-7864-2486-3).

From Salem Poor, who distinguished himself at the Battle of Bunker Hill, to Colin Powell, no less distinguished as a Vietnam War veteran and the nation's first black man to be appointed Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, African Americans have played an important role in the history of the U.S. armed forces, both in war and peace. That their contributions have generally not been recognized is an oversight that the present volume aims to rectify. Indeed, the author states forthrightly that, “The purpose of this book is to inform the public of the significant impact these black individuals have had on the United States military” (1).

Although the title suggests a focus on the officer corps, coverage is almost evenly divided between the “brass hats”

and enlisted personnel. This is therefore a survey of black American military figures, with soldiers and sailors on an even playing field with generals and admirals. The 1,105 entries follow a standard format of listing the individual's name, rank, and branch of service, which together act as a heading. The heading is followed by a rundown of military training courses attended, duty stations assigned, promotions awarded, and other highlights of each career profiled. This approach reveals a major weakness, for little to no analysis accompanies the unvarnished facts. The entries tell the reader the “what” but neglect to include the “why” and “how.” For that reason, the “significant impact” that the author professes to show the reader is all too often missing in action. A case in point is the following entry: “Bayless, Harvey. Major—Air Force. Harvey Bayless was inducted into the armed services in May 1943. Serving in the 96th Service Group in support of the 332nd Fighter Group in Italy in 1944, he received a field promotion to Second Lieutenant and served as a Communications Maintenance Officer. He was honorably discharged in 1946” (30). Properly, this is more a catalog of experiences than a biographical sketch. The reader is left to ask, who are these people and why are they in this book?

Other aspects of this work are also problematic. The black and white photographs, while numerous, are generally poorly reproduced. In fact, many appear to be downloads from Web sites and are so blurry as to be useless. Although some historical figures are included, the majority of entries concern twentieth-century personalities, especially those still on active duty. This results in page after page of obscure contemporary commanders and non-coms while deserving individuals of the past are left out. Lastly, no account is given of where Sergeant Major Hawkins (yes, the author and career army man is included in the book) obtained his information, as there are no sources cited. Therefore the veracity of the material is open to question and the reader is left to infer that the author relied heavily on “the many people in the Department of Defense who performed valuable services in the preparation of this book” (vii).

Collection development librarians would better serve their patrons by selecting *African Americans at War: An Encyclopedia* by Jonathan D. Sutherland (ABC-CLIO, 2004). This two-volume set provides not only the “significant impact” lacking in the work under review here, but contains entries on themes and concepts germane to African Americans' battles with prejudice at home even as they battled the enemy abroad. While there are fewer total biographies presented, the ones that appear represent true trailblazers, as opposed to a seemingly indiscriminate roster of men and women in uniform.—*Michael F. Bemis, Assistant Librarian, Washington County Library, Woodbury, Minnesota*

Black Americans: A Statistical Sourcebook. 2007 ed. American Profiles Series. Woodside, Calif.: Information Publications, 2007. 390p. \$79 (ISBN 978-0-929960-44-9).

Even in this time of electronic information storage and

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*

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*

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,