
This two-volume set represents a substantial revision of the first edition, which was first published in 2004. It contains roughly 350 unsigned entries, of which nearly 150 are new to this edition. The remaining 200 appeared in the first edition, but have since undergone emendation. The new entries were added to increase the international scope of the work. Each entry concludes with a “See Also” list of other entries that may be of interest, along with bibliographical references.

The work is very well organized. Both volumes begin with a list of the entries, and with a Guide to Related Topics that collates entries on similar subjects. The second volume contains a bibliography and a thorough index. Finding information within the encyclopedia will be easy for the high school and undergraduate students and general public for whom this work is in part aimed.

There is a wealth of information to be found about wedding customs in all the major religions. Dating, betrothal, and wedding customs of various countries are also explored in-depth. Specific regional and national customs are covered for a wider understanding on how weddings occur in other cultures. Unfortunately, no explanation is given as to why some countries are considered worthy of individual entries, while others are not.

Some curious omissions exist within the work. There is no entry on maiden names, a topic on which there is great cultural divergence. Such a topic would seem to be a natural fit for the work’s stated global perspective. There is little exploration of nontraditional and same-sex partnerships of the past or present; there are no entries for topics like Boston marriage or gay and lesbian marriage. Language used throughout the text typically describes weddings taking place between a bride and a groom.

Faults aside, this is a useful, albeit nonessential resource that is easy to use. Libraries that have a well-used copy of the first edition may want to purchase this revised edition. High school and public libraries that wish to expand reference resources on cultural topics may find this title useful.—Sharon E. Reidt, Technical Services Librarian, Marlboro College Library, Marlboro, Vermont


Since the 1950s, deinstitutionalization has revolutionized how Americans receive mental health care. In the early twentieth century, acute or chronic patients were treated (and sometimes permanently confined) in residential facilities.