

Reference Books

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Editor

The Concise Encyclopedia of the Great Recession, 2007–2010. Ed. by Jerry M. Rosenberg. Lanham, MD.: Scarecrow, 2010. 391 p. alkaline \$60 (ISBN 978-0-8108-7660-6). E-book available, (978-0-8108-7691-0).

Rosenberg is a well known, prolific author of business dictionaries such as *Dictionary of Banking* (Wiley, 1993), *Dictionary of Business and Management* (Wiley, 1993), *Dictionary of Marketing and Advertising* (Wiley, 1995) as well as a number of books on the Middle East. In this encyclopedia he states the goal to be an “attempt to spell out the activities and events of the past two years and to be a guide to help navigate the reader through this economic downturn” (viii). One quibble about the source is that the title indicates the information will span 2007–2010 but the content is limited to 2008–2009 period. The goals go on to state “this book should help readers to better understand the reasoning, motives, hidden agendas, and power plays of those responsible for this debacle and, most important, what the government has done to try to overcome it” (viii). Unfortunately, the book does not really address the stated goals.

This encyclopedia contains an A to Z list of short entries. There is a reader’s note giving information about the dates that are used in the entries and how the cross-references work. There is also an alphabetical index. The entries range in length from a sentence to several pages though most are no longer than a paragraph. There are entries with only “see” references such as “ABA see AMERICAN BANKERS ASSOCIATION.” Some examples of the topics that contain lengthier entries are China, Citigroup, Dubai, Ford, Japan, Russia and Unemployment. Many of the entries seem to be filler and don’t advance the goal of helping the reader to better understand the recession. For example, under Portugal it states “unemployment in Portugal in the second quarter 2009 was 9.2 percent and the economy shrank by 3.7 percent in 2009.” Most of the entries concerning companies are only a line or two relating the plummeting of sales, how jobs were affected, and net losses. There is no context for entries like these to show if questionable business practices or risk taking contributed to the economic climate.

The lofty goals of the book make it seem like the reader will have a greater understanding of the big picture of the recession when in fact, this source is purely an encyclopedia with entries. There is no timeline, there is no text to try and connect the information, and there is nothing to help the reader understand how all the concepts fit together. This is a straight forward reference book of recession-related terms and concepts. The bigger question is whether these types of reference books are necessary anymore. All of the information contained in this source could be found elsewhere, although

if a user was researching the recession, it is a handy guide for quick facts and figures. This feels like a quickie book to be the first to market on the topic.—Stacey Marien, *Acquisitions Librarian, American University, Washington, D.C.*

The Early Republic and Antebellum America: An Encyclopedia of Social, Political, Cultural, and Economic History. Ed. by Christopher Bates. Armonk, N.Y.: Sharpe Reference, 2010. 4 vols. alkaline \$449.00. (ISBN: 978-0-7656-8126-3)

“A page of history is worth a volume of logic,” stated Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., in *New York Trust Co. v. Eisner* (256 U.S. 345, 349 [1921]). That sentiment alone is reason enough to have produced this thirteen hundred plus page work on the earliest chapters of the American saga. Bracketed by the end of the Revolutionary War in 1781 and the beginning of the Civil War in 1861, the scope of this set examines the intervening eight decades. As the subtitle indicates, multiple perspectives are taken into account, with alphabetical entries covering such diverse topics as health and medicine (“Epidemics,” “Food and Diet,” “Mental Illness”), religion (“Baptists,” “Religion, African American,” “Religion, Native American”), women and gender (“Clothing and Fashion,” “Gender Roles,” “Marriage and Divorce”), slavery (“Turner Rebellion,” “Underground Railroad”), even geography (“Chicago, Illinois,” “Northwest Territory”). Just as important as the what and where types of articles are the who; about 165 biographical sketches include the famous (“Adams, John,” “Stowe, Harriet Beecher”), infamous (“Burr, Aaron,” “Turner, Nat”) and the unjustly forgotten, such as Charles Brockden Brown (1771–1810), who is generally considered to be the nation’s first significant novelist.

Notable features include plenty of access points, such as a table of contents, list of sidebar articles, topic finder (list of entries by subject) and index. Volume 1 contains an introductory overview of the period as a whole, plus four other essays regarding issues of the era, such as sectional conflict and foreign affairs. Volume 4, meanwhile, contains a generous selection of primary documents of the period, ten chronologies covering broad categories (“Expansion and Exploration,” “Science and Technology”), a glossary and a well rounded bibliography.

One would be hard pressed to discover the omission of any important person, place, thing, or event in this unusually inclusive set. The main quibble is that some topics mentioned in passing as part of other entries deserve fuller discussion as separate articles. The Articles of Confederation receives one sentence under the heading of “Anti-Federalists,” for example, while depressions and financial panics, which occurred at regular intervals during this period, receive but a brief appearance in “Banks and Banking,” and a few other places.

Editor Bates is due shortly to earn his PhD in American history from the University of California at Los Angeles. He has been teaching courses in the same since 2004 at California State Polytechnic University at Pomona. Together with a three member editorial board and two hundred some academics