

SOURCES

sional scholars.—Steven R. Edscorn, *Library Director and Associate Professor of Theological Bibliography, Memphis Theological Seminary*.

The Nineties in America. Ed. by Milton Berman. Decades. Pasadena, Calif.: Salem, 2009. 3 vols. alkaline \$364 (ISBN 978-1-58765-500-5).

The 1990s may not come to mind as a watershed decade like the depression thirties or the socially convulsive sixties. Nevertheless, the nineties have passed into history and reference sources about that decade are beginning to appear. *The Nineties in America* is the fifth entry in the Decades series by Salem Press that covers every decade beginning with the 1950s. As with the other volumes in this series, the aim of this three volume set is to cover “events, movements, people, and trends in popular culture, literature, art, sports, science, technology, economics and politics in both the United States and Canada” (ix).

The decade of the nineties has already been covered by Gale in its *American Decades* series (Gale, 1996–2001). The Gale volumes are organized into broad categories such as “World Events,” “The Arts,” and “Lifestyles and Social Trends”; within each category are a chronology of events and short entries on trends and people important in that area. *The Nineties in America* and the other Salem press Decades books differ from the Gale volumes in that they provide a very large number of entries (approximately 650 articles in the nineties set) in a purely alphabetical arrangement. Some entries are broad in scope (“African Americans,” “International Relations”), while others are much more narrow profiles of people or events (“Chicago Heat Wave of 1995,” “Cirque du Soleil”). Volume 3 includes a list of entries by category and appendixes providing a time line of the decade, a glossary of new words and slang, major legislation and judicial decisions of the decade, and many lists of award winners in the arts and sports.

The Nineties in America can offer entries on topics that the Gale volumes can only mention in passing. The aforementioned “Chicago Heat Wave of 1995” entry covers almost three pages and includes a short bibliography. The same topic is not even listed in the index of Gale’s 1990s volume. The Kelly Flinn Air Force scandal merits a full article in this source but is given only a short paragraph in the Gale book. The biographical entries focus almost entirely on the 1990s and are not complete biographies. For instance, the entries on tycoon Donald Trump and writer John Updike mention nothing about their upbringing, education, or careers prior to 1990 or post-1999.

In assessing a reference work such as this, Reference Librarians should think about the potential uses of “decades” sources. Likely users of such reference books include high school or college students seeking information about the social conditions, fashions, lifestyles, and popular culture of a particular decade. The Gale *American Decades* volumes, which are organized around broad themes, are well suited

to this purpose. *The Nineties in America*, comprised of a large number of entries alphabetically arranged and indexed very broadly in the third volume, does not facilitate this kind of research as easily. Libraries looking at restricted budgets may also be concerned about the amount of duplication involved here. The subjects of many of the entries, particularly the narrowly focused biographical entries, will be better covered in other reference works. Libraries looking to cover the decade of the 1990s in their reference collections should acquire the Gale book first; those with extensive budgets could consider this source as a supplement.—Peter Bliss, *Reference Librarian, University of California, Riverside*.

Science Fiction Television Series, 1990–2004: Histories, Casts and Credits for 58 Shows. By Frank Garcia and Mark Phillips. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2009. 431p. alkaline \$59.95 (ISBN 978-0-7864-2483-2).

In the “Introduction” to their latest reference work, science fiction scholars Frank Garcia and Mark Phillips offer an informed overview of science fiction television (SFTV) series. The key event in the genre’s recent history, they explain, was the decision of Paramount executive Rick Berman to join *Star Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry in launching the series *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, which would run from 1987 through 1994 and eventually be succeeded by three more spinoffs.

Garcia and Phillips go on to describe those four series and fifty-four others, from the famous to the nearly forgotten, from *Andromeda* to *The X-Files*. The entries vary in length from less than three pages (the short-lived anthology series *Welcome to Paradox*, for example) to almost thirteen (*Babylon 5*). A typical entry opens with a short statement of the program’s premise and lists of cast, recurring cast, and guest stars. The discussions are lengthy but very readable, enlivened by extensive quotations from those involved, and conclude with cast notes. Many entries are illustrated with black-and-white photographs and include brief bibliographies of printed and electronic sources.

In the interests of space the authors exclude comedy, fantasy, horror, superhero, and children’s series, as well as those in which the science fiction element was of relatively minor importance.

The work’s features include an appendix consisting of additional quotations from interviewees. A second, more useful appendix offering brief descriptions of older series is based on Garcia and Phillips’s earlier volume, *Science Fiction Television Series: Episode Guides, Histories, and Casts and Credits for 62 Prime Time Shows, 1959 through 1989* (McFarland, 1996). The index is gratifyingly comprehensive.

There are currently no other printed sources offering comprehensive coverage of SFTV series for the period in question, and while there is extensive information about individual programs on the World Wide Web, quality and reliability remain elusive on many sites. Garcia and Phillips’ guide is recommended for larger collections emphasizing television,