

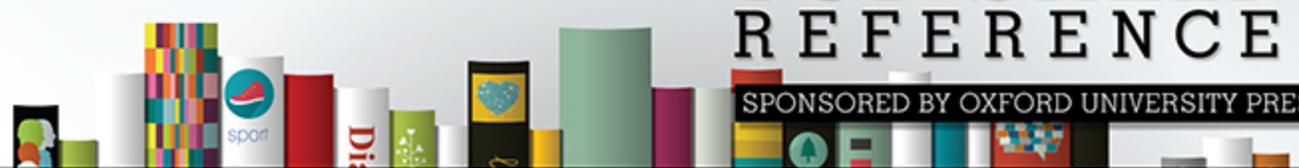


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TOP SHELF REFERENCE

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Hopefully, the subject line of this issue of *Top Shelf Reference* won't offend the sensibilities of too many of you—it comes directly from Nicolette Sosulski's "Real Life Reference" column this month, and I dare say any one of us would be delighted if two young punks came in and heaped such praise on our libraries.

I promise there is nothing else uncouth in the rest of the issue. You'll find a look at the Bureau of Labor Statistics' American Time Use Survey, a top 10 list of recent multicultural reference sources, and our usual roundup of what librarians are tweeting about. In addition, both regular columnist Dave Tyckoson and our sponsor, Oxford University Press, engage in a discussion about electronic reference. If you have any suggestions about what you'd like us to cover—or would like to contribute a feature article—feel free to e-mail me at rvnuk@ala.org.

—[Rebecca Vnuk](#), Editor, Reference and Collection Management, *Booklist*

Real-Life Reference: Your Library Kicks Butt, Ma'am

by Nicolette Sosulski



There were two of them approaching the desk. My great-aunt Catherine, may she rest in peace, might have called them "hoodlums." Or "wild boys." Truly, they did stand out a little amid my rather yuppie patron base. I am in a small midwestern city. The sign at the entrance to the city limits has a notice that a member of the winning women's Olympic soccer team is from here, and the soccer mom is the dominant species in the library biosphere. These were not soccer moms. One had vibrant blue hair, tattoos, combat boots, and a T-shirt with a very angry saying. The other had a blue-black Mohawk and many piercings and chains. I was wearing a demure long skirt, and, yes, a cardigan. I think my hair might have been in a bun that day. I stepped forward.

"Hi there." Welcoming smile. "How may I help you?"

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Talking Shop with Dave Tyckoson: Challenges for Reference Publishing

by Dave Tyckoson

With so much information available on the Internet, the use of reference materials in most libraries has dropped considerably. This is a natural consequence of the availability of free online information. When users can get the facts they seek online, it's inevitable that many will not bother to come to the library to use a reference book. If we add to that the economic problems of libraries during the last several years, the challenges facing reference publishing become all the more daunting.

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These factors have resulted in a dramatic change in how reference work is done. For over a century, reference books have held a special place in library collections. Since at least the 1880s, when Melvil Dewey created the great reference room at Columbia, reference books have occupied pride of place in many libraries. Not only did reference sources usually have their own designated shelving in a prominent location in the building, but they were also treated with an air of respect and reverence far above most other library books. They did not usually circulate because they were in such high demand that

they needed to be available in the library at all times. Those days are now part of history in most libraries. Now, the majority of reference work is done online. Reference books have gone from being the primary source for answering questions to, at best, a secondary source.

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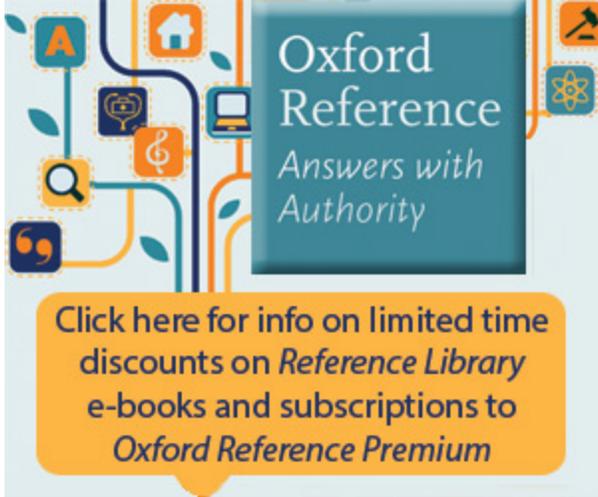
by Megan McPherson

Imagine you're a student, and you're writing a research paper on a topic you know very little about. Delving into any broad subject is a daunting task so simply Googling it or checking *Wikipedia* can seemingly be a quick and appealing way to start. But relying on these sources for authoritative and trustworthy research can lead students down a dangerous path toward misinformation. For librarians to do battle against these impulses in their students, they must be equipped with suitable armor.

Luring students in the direction of quality reference works is no easy feat. Traditional print reference and encyclopedias are not as easily accessible or discoverable as online sources. In contrast, Oxford's authoritative digital reference program, [Oxford Reference](#), is an excellent alternative to the siren song of unreliable Internet sources.

The *Oxford Reference* platform is simultaneously easy to use, engaging, and robust, allowing students to browse time lines, quotations, and overview pages that provide a structured approach to their research.

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Reference Site to Remember: American Time Use Survey

by Rebecca Vnuk



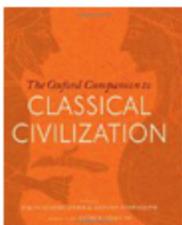
One thing that most librarians can count on is still getting classic statistical questions. And tracking some answers down can feel like the proverbial needle in a haystack.

"How much time do women really spend shopping?" "How much time do Americans waste on their tablets?" "Do women bear the brunt of the household chores?"

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Featured Reference Review: *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization*

by Christopher McConnell



This second edition of [The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization](#) (OCCC) seeks to make available to a general readership authoritative information about the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome by reprinting selected entries from the fourth edition of [The Oxford Classical Dictionary](#) (OCD), long recognized as a standard reference work in classics, along with additional changes. The result is a shorter, less expensive volume the editors hope will appeal to a wider audience.

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Top 10 Multicultural Reference Sources

by Rebecca Vnuk



Our first top 10 made up of multicultural reference titles encompasses subjects ranging from peace and the Buddha to the violence that often erupts from religious controversies. The titles selected were reviewed in *Booklist* between January 2013 and January 2015.

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#twitterreference

by Rebecca Vnuk

Librarians rarely just sit there while out at the reference desk. Even when there's not a patron in front of them, they're often furiously typing away at something on their computer. It's likely that they're searching for the answer to a previous question, working on the latest collection report, tweaking a new public desk schedule . . . or perhaps they're tweeting. Let's take a peek.

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