Even with the excited anticipation of President George W. Bush's inauguration, the Reference Users Services Association (RUSA)'s 2001 Reference Sources Committee remained focused on the task of selecting the year's outstanding reference sources during ALA's Midwinter Meeting in Washington, D.C. Although preliminary committee work began months earlier via e-mail, it took five sessions and 15 hours for the nine-member committee to select 28 titles as outstanding.

The committee annually evaluates reference titles and compiles a list of the outstanding items that are suitable for small to medium-sized academic and public libraries. The size of library budgets is a factor the committee considers in its selection. On occasion, more expensive titles are listed if considered to be exceptionally useful or unique such as this year's Encyclopedia of Biodiversity (Fitzroy Dearborn) and the Encyclopedia of Psychology.

The 2001 selected titles varied widely in content, size, and scope. There is something for the automobile enthusiast (The Beaulieu Encyclopedia of the Automobile), the fisher (Ken Schultz's Fishing Encyclopedia), the sports admirer (Sports: The Complete Visual Reference), and for those who cherish spiritual matters (Contemporary American Religion, Encyclopedia of Judaism, and the Encyclopedia of Monasticism). The committee also included large multivolume sets (Women in World History) as well as small single-volume tomes (Encyclopedia of Movie Special Effects).

The process of selecting the year's best reference sources is detailed. Each committee member is assigned one or more subject areas, and combs publishers' catalogs, announcements, and reviews seeking potential titles. By October of each year, members submit lists of nominations to the committee chair. The chair compiles a preliminary list based on that information and forwards it to the entire committee along with reviews. The committee considers the evidence and refines the list until days before the Midwinter Meeting, when the chair finalizes the list of nominated titles.

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With more than 400 entries on paper collectibles from the most obscure to the most common, this outstanding source is arranged alphabetically and provides written descriptions and photographs of anything from an ABC primer from 19th-century London to winkle bags. This is truly a source to be consulted by collectors or anyone looking for a glimpse of the past.


This source is unique among encyclopedias of homosexuality with separate volumes devoted to gay and lesbian issues. The volumes consist of short, signed entries arranged alphabetically. This set, which should become the standard in its field, will be a useful addition to all public and academic libraries.


The editors have compiled a comprehensive source that provides a first-stop reference on broad areas or specific topics on the Civil War. The contemporary photographs and lithographs bring the human element into the encyclopedia, a type of reference more known for facts and figures than emotions. The primary-source documents volume brings obscure resources together, which will further illuminate the period for students.


The scholarship and the balanced nature of a controversial, highly partisan issue are what make this volume important and useful to students of current events. The articles are clear and accessible, and discuss the political movements, arts, customs, and individuals that have made an impact on the Palestinian world.


This encyclopedia is the first work of its kind devoted entirely to the history of the United States Cabinet and its secretaries. Arranged alphabetically by cabinet department, it provides a history of the department and detailed biographical and historical entries of the members who served in some of the nation’s highest positions. Also available as an e-book, it is a truly outstanding source filled with facts about the U.S. Cabinet.

Covering the period from the beginning of the Renaissance to the present, this encyclopedia consists of 209 signed articles and nearly 300 biographical entries. The set is thoroughly indexed, amply illustrated, and a joy to read. Graduate students will find it useful as an introduction to historiography while advanced high school students will enjoy the articles on historical topics.

RELIGION


This excellent source furnishes students and scholars with information on contemporary religion, personalities, and popular topics from Fundamentalist Christianity to feng shui.


With more than 100 lengthy essays, this exceptional work on Judaism covers more than its historical framework. The Encyclopedia of Judaism provides complete and accurate coverage of Judaism—everything from its history, beliefs, and observances, from the beginning to modern times. It is an excellent source written by scholars.


This well-written, well-researched reference source brings together monastic life with particular attention to three traditions: Buddhist, Eastern Christian, and Western Christian.

SCIENCE AND NATURE


A comprehensive resource that explains every aspect of raising fish commercially, this selection covers the biology and the business aspects of the subject.


The encyclopedia looks at all forms of life, from nematodes to human beings, in 313 signed articles. The set covers a wide range of scientific and social science issues, making it a useful resource for learning about purely scientific concepts as well as issues concerning human effects on the environment. Academic and larger public libraries will find this work invaluable for answering questions about environmental and biological topics.


This resource is ideal for patrons seeking information about the principles and methods of paleontology, paleontology in different regions of the world, and the primary researchers in the field. Dinosaurs as well as all types of animals, plants, and organisms discovered in fossils are included.


The American Psychological Association, under the editorial direction of Alan Kazdin, has produced an exceptional multidisciplinary and multicultural encyclopedia.


This unique reference book focuses on scientific development in the 16th and 17th centuries, when the field of science underwent tremendous advances and discoveries. The 441 articles cover scientists, processes, phenomena, philosophy, religion, and professional societies.
This series discusses how the major fields of science developed during specific time periods. Each volume focuses on a range of years and includes developments in exploration, life sciences, mathematics, physical sciences, and technology. When the series is completed, the seven volumes will cover 2000 B.C. to the present.

Scientific American Science Desk Reference. 690p. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1999 (0-471-35675-1), $39.95. Divided into 15 sections covering a specific scientific discipline, this work includes sections on key concepts, glossaries, and biographies of prominent researchers in that field, chronologies, and information unique to that particular discipline.

Language and Literature


Encyclopedia of 20th-Century American Humor, by Alleen Pace Nilsen and Don L. F. Nilsen. 360p. Phoenix, Ariz.: Oryx, 2000 (1-573-56218-1), $67.50. This unique encyclopedia treats the concepts, persons, themes, and media of 20th-century American humor and humor studies. More than 100 alphabetically arranged entries highlight a broad range of humor-related topics from wit, understatement, and ambiguity to late-night talk shows.

Researchers from scholars to the general public will find this reference source an excellent starting place to find definitions, summaries, authors, artists, and regional and historical overviews of fairy tales, past and present.

**Sports**


No other encyclopedia covers the world of women in international sports with such depth, currency, and detail. This three-volume, illustrated reference set provides articles on all aspects of the history and the current state of women's sports. Included are more than 230 biographies, 170 individual and group sports, and 75 country profiles, plus examinations of cultural, societal, health, and ethical issues.


Whether you are looking for a fishing destination, description of a species of fish, or information on equipment, it's all here. Written by a long-time editor of *Field and Stream* and renowned fishing expert, this mammoth new guide with more than 2,000 entries and 1,400 color drawings and photographs will serve as the seminal guide to sports fishing for years to come.


A sure winner for any sports reference collection. Using lavish color graphics, photographs, and concise, clear explanations, readers can learn about the history, rules, techniques, equipment, playing fields, terminology, training regimens, player positions, and physical requirements for more than 125 sports played around the world.

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