

It's the **LITTLE** Things

The 2006 List of Outstanding Reference Sources

Attention to detail attracts the selectors who picked this year's reference standouts by Matthew J. Wayman

At each ALA Midwinter Meeting, the members of the Reference and User Services Association's (RUSA) Reference Sources Committee gather in a meeting room to select the year's best reference sources for small and medium-sized libraries. Committee members present the titles they nominated, debate ensues, and finally members vote to decide whether or not each source merits recommendation. Publisher representatives often attend while committee members dissect their latest and greatest creations. ¶ This year's committee, comprised of public and academic librarians from California, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Washington, had nominated a total of 61 titles at the onset of the San Antonio Midwinter Meeting. After 15 hours of deliberations, only 12 made the cut. **The selected titles not only provide well-written entries in organized fashion, but also do the "little things"**—providing features such as good indexing and cross-references, signed entries, information about contributors and editors, bibliographies for each entry, good physical layout, sturdy binding, and clear photos and illustrations.

Second editions are not normally considered unless the revision is significant enough that it constitutes a nearly original source. For example, you may note the omission of Macmillan's recent second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Religion*. But the committee elected Oxford's *Black Women in America*, second edition, deciding that its revisions were more substantial.

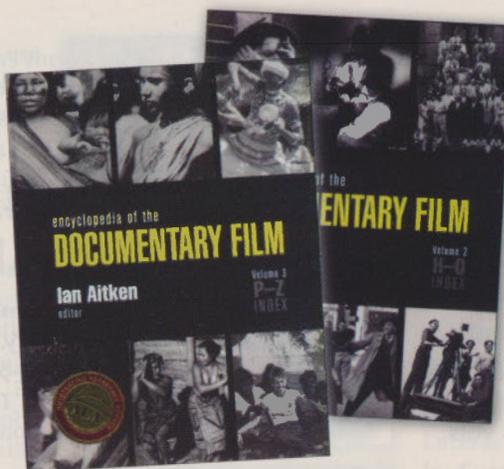
Readers familiar with the committee's work may notice that the lists from recent years have tended to be short. The RUSA website (www.ala.org/rusa/) provides lists of award-winners from 1997 to the present. Some number-crunching reveals that between 1997 and 2002, the average number of winning titles was 29, with a high of 38 in 1999. Between 2003 and 2006, the average number of winners has been just under 17, with a high of 22 in 2005; the 2006 list constituted the lowest ever, although the 2003 list came a close second at only 13 titles.

So what makes for these shorter lists? Have publishers been focusing their efforts on developing electronic reference sources, and begun neglecting print sources? Or have committee members become more stringent in their evaluations? Perhaps the answer contains elements of both. In any case, print sources remain important. Greater efforts by publishers to produce high-quality print works would be welcome.

THE ARTS

***Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Photography*, edited by Lynne Warren. 3 vols., 2,048 p. Routledge, 2005 (1-5795-8393-8), \$395.**

The 20th century saw the development of photography as a fine art, and most of this set is dedicated to entries for art photography. Included are lists of exhibitions and major works, and selected bibliographies. Aesthetic, critical, technological, and business concepts from conservation to deconstruction are also well-covered, as are other forms including family and fashion photography and the development of photography



internationally. Excellent writing that balances sophistication and accessibility makes this title particularly outstanding.

***Encyclopedia of the Documentary Film*, edited by Ian Aitken. 3 vols., 1,968 p. Routledge, 2005 (1-5795-8445-4), \$565.**

The first major reference on this increasingly popular art form includes topical, technical, and national entries, but articles about films

and filmmakers are at its core. Different writers cover a film and its maker, providing varied perspectives and introducing the reader to critical discourse on documentaries. Topics on the periphery of documentary, such as the 1967 film *The Battle of Algiers* and the films of Andy Warhol, are also represented in this perspicacious set.

RELIGION

***Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, edited by Bron R. Taylor. 2 vols., 1,928 p. Thoemmes Continuum, 2005 (1-8437-1138-9), \$450.**

With the emergence of new scholarly areas that include "environmental ethics" and "religion and ecology," this unique work provides over 1,000 entries written by 518 contributors from a variety of universities, institutes, and foundations across the globe. The two volumes are divided into three entry groupings: Scholarly entries, which are peer-reviewed; scholarly perspectives, which "afford prominent figures an opportunity to reflect on the religion and nature field in a more personal and reflective way"; and practitioner entries, which includes entries written by people active in particular nature-related spiritualities. For more information, check out the accompanying website at www.religionandnature.com/ern/.



SOCIAL SCIENCES

***Black Women in America, 2nd ed.*, edited by Darlene Clark Hine. 3 vols., 1,696 p. Oxford University Press, 2005 (0-1951-5677-3), \$325.**

Restructured, expanded, and updated, this new edition of the title that won the Dartmouth Medal in 1994 presents easily accessible information written by a distinguished group of contributors. More than 500

alphabetically arranged biographical and topical entries are accompanied by 44 sidebars. Well-chosen archival illustrations and contemporary photographs enhance the text. With useful bibliographies, a thorough index, a chronology, and a thematic outline of entries, this beautifully written work will inspire and support research in high school, public, and academic libraries.

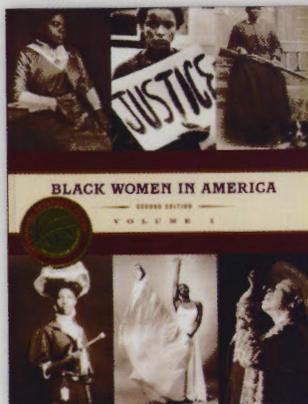
***Immigration and Asylum: From 1900 to the Present*, edited by Matthew J. Gibney and Randall Hansen. 3 vols., 1,095 p. ABC-CLIO, 2005 (1-5760-7796-9), \$285.**

Current and international in scope, this timely set's first two volumes comprise 184 alphabetically arranged articles on immigration into all regions of the world, issues concerning immigration, reasons for immigration and emigration, and organizations that aid or facilitate immigration. Sample articles include "Afghanistan and Refugees," "Clandestine Migration," "Environmental Refugees," "Irish Diaspora," "Migration Between Northern and Southern Countries," and the "World Trade Organization." Volume three contains 84 relevant historical and political documents, many of which are reproduced in their entirety.

LITERATURE

***The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Multiethnic American Literature*, edited by Emmanuel S. Nelson. 5 vols., 2,692 p. Greenwood Press, 2005 (0-313-33059-X), \$499.95.**

Truly multiethnic in scope, this encyclopedia assembles a wealth of information for libraries that are now peppered with numerous volumes devoted to a single ethnic literary tradition. More than 300 contributors provide authoritative information on concepts, major works, events, people, and publishers that represent the literatures and voices of the multiethnic American experience. Numerous entries focus on individual authors. Further readings and black-and-white images

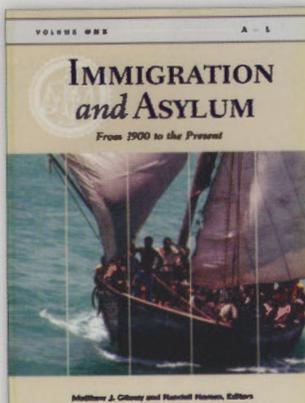
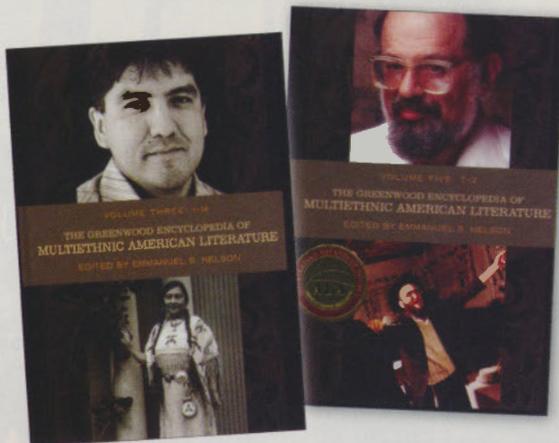


are included. Breadth and readability make this a wonderful resource for students and general readers alike.

NATURAL AND APPLIED SCIENCES

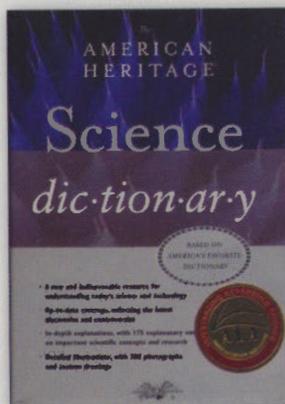
***American Heritage Science Dictionary*. 704 p. Houghton Mifflin, 2005 (0-618-45504-3), \$19.95.**

This comprehensive, inexpensive dictionary is a must-have for all ready reference collections. Published in the familiar American Heritage format, this dictionary includes more than 8,500 entries encompassing everything from anthropology to zoology. Scattered throughout the single volume are over 300 biographical entries and 150 descriptive notes, as well as numerous charts, tables, and other illustrations. Intended for the lay reader, the clear and well-written text is also appropriate for more advanced users. This dictionary will prove invaluable for patrons and staff alike.



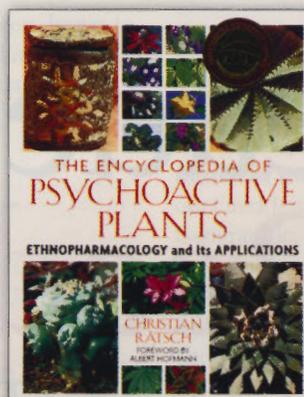
***Encyclopedia of Cryptozoology: A Global Guide to Hidden Animals and Their Pursuers*, by Michael Newton. 584 p. McFarland, 2005 (0-7864-2036-7), \$95.**

This scholarly treatment of a perennially popular topic thoroughly covers evidence of mysterious creatures, the people who have pursued and studied such animals, and locations where sightings have occurred. Treatment is global and spans recorded history. Completing the text are essays on cryptotourism and hoaxes, plus an introduction that explains the history of the subject. More than 300 drawings and photos accompany the 2,744 entries. Copious end matter includes a glossary, timeline, and bibliography, in addition to guides on cryptozoology in film, television, and fiction.



***Encyclopedia of Psychoactive Plants: Ethnopharmacology and Its Applications*, by Christian Rättsch. 942 p. Park Street Press, 2005 (0-8928-1978-2), \$125.**

This one-of-a-kind resource covers the botany, history, distribution, cultivation, preparation, and dosage for more than 400 plants that “affect the mind or alter the state of consciousness” with their stimulant, sedative, or hallucinogenic properties. Entries include descriptions of the plants and their ritual and medicinal usages in different cultures, discussions of works of art representing or inspired by the plants, and thorough bibliographies of research literature. Illustrated with more than 800 color photographs, woodcuts, and drawings, the *Encyclopedia of Psychoactive Plants* makes a unique addition to herbal and traditional medicine collections.

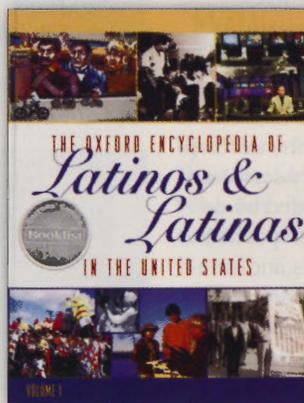
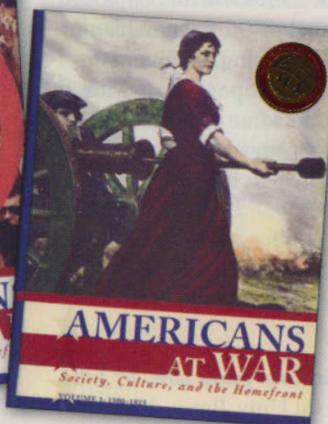
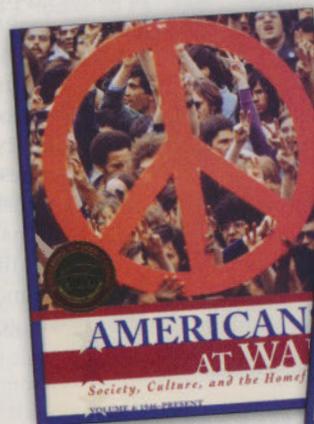
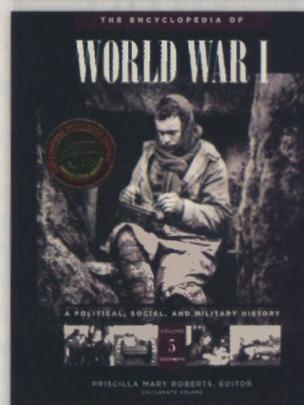


HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

***Americans at War: Society, Culture, and the Homefront*, edited by John P. Resch. 4 vols., 1,196 p. Macmillan Reference USA, 2005 (0-0286-5806-X set; 0-0286-5993-7 e-book), \$415 print, \$530 as e-book.**

The 395 thematic articles in this set go beyond armies and battlefields to examine the far-flung effects of wars and conflicts on American society. This set—which covers events, people, organizations, movements, and primary source documents related to American wars, conflicts, rebellions, insurrections, and uprisings from 1500 to the present and spans topics in politics, economics, social life, religion, arts and entertainment, popular culture, fashion, and technology—will bring a different perspective on war to researchers in public, high school, and academic libraries.

***Encyclopedia of World War I: A Political, Social, and Military History*, edited by Spencer C. Tucker and Priscilla Mary Roberts. 5 vols., 1,661 p. ABC-CLIO, 2005 (1-85109-420-2; 1-85109-425-3 e-book), \$485 print, \$530 as e-book.**



ABC-CLIO continues its winning track record for comprehensive military history encyclopedias with this title on the Great War. In addition to the nitty-gritty articles on military battles, tactics, and equipment, the encyclopedia also includes coverage of important events, social issues, and personalities. The documents volume provides easy access to more than 200 important primary sources of the period.

***Oxford Encyclopedia of Latinos and Latinas in the United States*, edited by Suzanne Oboler and Deena J. González. 4 vols., 2,344 p. Oxford University Press, 2005 (0-1951-5600-5), \$525.**

The editors began with the goal of *marcar presencia*: to document the presence and contributions of Latinos and Latinas throughout American history. With over 900 entries covering everything from “Acequias” to “Zoot Suit,” this encyclopedia succeeds admirably in fulfilling its goal by providing in-depth coverage of all aspects of the Latino and Latina experience in the United States. Articles written with both the

student and specialist in mind provide substantive content supplemented by extensive bibliographies. This is the standard work in the field. Also available electronically via the Oxford Digital Reference Shelf. 

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Committee, he wrote the introduction to this article and edited the annotations written by committee members, who are: Jeff Schwartz, Santa Monica (Calif.) Public Library; Robyn Rosenberg, Penn State Great Valley; Asia Gross, University City (Mo.) Public Library; Georgia Titonis, Boston Public Library; Theresa Mudrock, University of Washington, Seattle; Pauline Swartz, University of California at Los Angeles; Betsy Miguez, University of Louisiana at Lafayette; and Kathleen Collins, University of Washington, Seattle.