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## From the Reference Desk--Reviews of Reference Titles

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# From the Reference Desk

by **Tom Gilson** (Associate Editor, *Against the Grain*, and Head of Reference Emeritus, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC 29401) <gilson@cofc.edu>

**CQ Press** has published its tenth edition of the much respected *Political Handbook of the World* (2015, 9781483371573, \$395). This classic reference traces its lineage to 1928 when the very first edition was originally published by Council on Foreign Relations. Continuing that tradition, this current volume covers all nations of the world along with their related territories, as well as providing essays on intergovernmental organizations from the African Union to the World Trade Organization. This new edition updates all entries with “significant events and national elections through 2014.”

Each entry follows a standard format and starts by describing the country’s political status as well as its area, population, official language, major urban areas, current executives, etc. This is followed by a background description of the country, a comprehensive discussion of the government and politics, information about various political parties, and specifics about the legislature and cabinet. The essays are authoritative and comprehensive reviews of both the historical and contemporary political situation. They are laden with relevant facts and attempt to be as objective and straightforward as possible. Each entry includes a current map and is laid out in a visually accessible fashion, especially when one considers the extensive amount of text in each essay.

The *Political Handbook of the World* is the standard reference that serious researchers turn to for this type of information. It is authoritative and exhaustive offering unique in-depth coverage of the topics treated. Both academic libraries supporting political science curricula as well as larger public libraries where there are patrons interested in international affairs will want it in their collections.

The *Political Handbook of the World* is also available online (9781483371597, price available at [www.cqpress.com](http://www.cqpress.com)).

**Salem Press** has published a single-volume work entitled *Ancient Creatures* (2014,

978-1619256873, \$235) that concentrates on “the 100 most studied prehistoric creatures in educational curricula today.” Edited by **Spencer G. Lucas**, this book offers individual articles on each creature covered as well as critical essays that focus on topics like biological classifications, major eras in paleontology, extinctions, fossilization, and dinosaur intelligence.

Of course the bulk of the volume is devoted to articles that discuss the prehistoric creatures themselves from the Allosaurus to the Zephyrosaurus. These essays are grouped together by eras ranging from the Permian to Middle Jurassic to the Late Cretaceous. Each essay starts with an introduction followed by a discussion of the creature’s biological classification, anatomy, intelligence, reproduction and population, diet, behavior, habitat, and current research. The essays are informative and answer key questions about these ancient creatures in a factual and well organized fashion. One of the highlights of the book is the illustrations and sidebars that not only give readers an idea of what the creatures may have looked like, but also provides visuals that offer information on measurement and size, classification, fossil location, time periods and key vocabulary. Each entry also has a solid bibliography of books, journal articles, and Websites that students will find useful in expanding their research.

*Ancient Creatures* will appeal to the upper division high school students and undergraduates for which it was designed. Logically organized and accessible with informed essays reflecting current theories based on the fossil record, this volume discusses the prehistoric creatures that students are most interested in. It is also full of color illustrations, diagrams, and sidebars that not only visually enhance the book but also provide useful information. While some libraries may want to place it in reference, it is equally appropriate for circulating collections. Given the online access provided by Salem to libraries purchasing their print titles, utilizing the eBook as the reference copy while placing the print version in circulation is a good strategy.

**McFarland** has released another of its quirky but fascinating titles. The *Encyclopedia of Asylum Therapeutics, 1750-1950s* (2015, 9780786468973, \$55)

by sociologist **Mary De Young** is a single-volume work that shines a light on treatments afforded the mentally ill from the middle of the 18th century when asylums to treat the insane were first being established until the 1950s when drug therapies began taking center stage. It is a subject that may be distasteful and unpleasant to some, but

nonetheless, it is a history that is important to acknowledge and understand.

The articles are arranged alphabetically by name of treatment and then divided within the entry by subcategory. A brief definition is provided and then a narrative essay drawing heavily from personal accounts and various reports describes the treatment and its effects. The narrative approach often citing contemporary sources also establishes a useful historic context for the treatment being discussed. Useful bibliographies are interspersed throughout, a number of which are fairly substantial. Many of the topics covered sound off-putting to the modern ear. Entries like Etherization, Hydrotherapy, Shock Therapy, and Forced Feeding, not to mention Psychosurgery, Mechanical Devices, and Masks, Gags, and Toggles all sound like methods of torture rather than treatments. However, as **Ms. De Young** documents, they were all considered viable medical options at one time. Related entries are cross-referenced in the text in bold font while a detailed general index provides topic access at the individual page level. Black and white photos and illustrations enhance the text throughout.

The *Encyclopedia of Asylum Therapeutics, 1750-1950s* benefits from **Ms. De Young’s** thorough and comprehensive research. She does her best to provide multiple perspectives. She references not only the reports of the asylum doctors and officials but also the memoirs of actual patients, as well as the findings of investigative reports of oversight committees and newspapers accounts. Both engrossing and informative, this reference work will also find a home in a number of circulating collections. Academic libraries supporting courses in both medical sociology and medical history will do well to consider it.

**ABC-CLIO** has just added a two-volume set to its list entitled *Earth’s Landscape: An Encyclopedia of the World’s Geographic Features* (2015, 9781610694452, \$205; eBook, 9781610694469, call for pricing). Authored by **Joyce A. Quinn** and **Susan L. Woodward**, this set consists of individual entries covering some 460 natural geographic features from around the world along with a glossary, a list of recommended sources, three appendices, and a general index.

Authors **Quinn** and **Woodward** start with a very helpful introduction that lays a solid foundation for what follows. They begin by describing the physical process of landscape development and provide a table that offers an accessible geological time scale in which to place that development. They then discuss specific processes like plate tectonics, weathering, climate (including a table of major

*continued on page 45*



climate types), surface features like continents and oceans, and finally, geographical patterns that distinguish one landscape from another.

Naturally, the bulk of the set is made up of the A-Z entries which are brief and concise following a standard format that lends a useful consistency. Each starts with a geographic overview and location coordinates, a thorough description, the geologic history, the feature's biota and when germane, sections on circulation and major currents, protected areas, and environmental issues. Each entry is filled with scientific facts and details pertinent to description of the feature being discussed. Black and white photos illustrate a number of the articles. Admittedly, some color plates would have enhanced the visual appeal of the set even further, but they would have also boosted what is currently a modest price.

Added value is provided by three fascinating and useful appendices. The first offers a "top ten" list of prominent geographic features like the highest mountains, largest islands, deepest lakes, etc. The second consists of a series of opposing viewpoints on key geographical issues related to natural features, and the third provides suggested activities and discussion questions that will be of value to teachers and faculty. There is also a glossary that is very helpful given the numerous geological and geographical terms interspersed throughout the text. An alphabetical list of entries and a list of entries by geographical location along with a general index provide an element of organization as well as access to the articles. However, at least one omission was noticed in the list of entries by geographical location. Although there is a full entry for Zion National Park in volume two, surprisingly, it is not listed in the list by geographical location under United States — Utah where it should appear.

*Earth's Landscape: An Encyclopedia of the World's Geographic Features* is not intended for the casual tourist. It is an academic work that contains factual descriptions and explanations that will be valued by the serious student. The surface formations that are covered are prominent, international in scope, and representative of the earth's rich diversity. As such, they provide vivid testament to results of the earth's dynamic evolution over the millennia. Undergraduate and high school libraries supporting courses in geology, geography, and earth science will find that this set is well worth the purchase price.

### Extra Servings

SAGE Reference will be publishing two new second editions in July:

- The *SAGE Encyclopedia of Stem Cell Research*, (3 volumes) Second Edition (July 2015, 9781483347684, \$475 prepub.) edited by **Eric E. Bouhassira** is "filled with new procedures and

exciting medical breakthroughs, including executive orders from the **Obama** administration reversing barriers to research imposed under the **Bush** administration, court rulings impacting **NIH** funding of research based on human embryonic stem cells, edicts by the Papacy and other religious leaders, and the first success in cloning human stem cells..."

- The *SAGE Encyclopedia of World Poverty*, (5 volumes) Second Edition, (July 2015, 9781483345703, \$675 prepub.) edited by **Mehmet Odekon** "addresses the persistence of poverty across the globe while updating and expanding the landmark work, *Encyclopedia of World Poverty*, originally published in 2006 prior to the economic calamities of 2008. For instance, while continued high rates of income inequality might be unsurprising in developing countries such as Mexico, the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported in May 2013 even countries with historically low levels of income inequality have experienced significant increases over the past decade, including Denmark, Sweden, and Germany. The U.N. and the World Bank also emphasize the persistent nature of the problem..."

CQ Press will be releasing two new titles in August:

- *Vital Statistics on American Politics 2015-2016* (Aug. 2015, 9781483380315, \$135) edited by **Richard G. Niemi** and **Harold W. Stanley** "is updated with the most recent information available. The editors consult hundreds of sources to calculate and locate the data, facts, and figures that offer a vivid and multifaceted portrait of the broad spectrum of United States politics and policies. In over more than tables and figures, students, professional researchers, and interested citizens will find chapters devoted to key subject areas such as elections and political parties, public opinion and voting, the media, the three branches of U.S. government, foreign, military, social and economic policy, and much more..."
- *Politics In America 2016* (Aug. 2015, 9781483388038, price available upon request) is an online edition that "contains the profiles of the 535 members of the 113th Congress plus the six delegates, and offers concise and candid analysis of personalities, political styles, legislative agendas, political ambitions, and reputations of members at home and on Capitol Hill. Detailed

state and district information plus a wealth of information on partisan caucuses, standing committees, and other member facts round out the book..."

In February 2015 **Salem Press** published another in the *Defining Documents* series and in April 2015 released the first of a nine-volume collection:

- *Defining Documents in American History: World War II (1936-1947)* (Feb. 2015, 9781619257375, \$295) is a two-volume set that "provides readers with a new, interesting way to study the impact of World War II on American history. Through in-depth analysis of important primary documents from 1936 to 1947, readers will gain new insight into the causes, issues, and lasting effects of this pivotal time in American history. This title offers a broad range of historical documents on important authors and subjects in World War II research..."
- *Countries, Peoples & Cultures* (2015, 978-1-61925-800-6, \$895) is a nine-volume series that "provides valuable insight into the social, cultural, economic, historical, and religious practices and beliefs of nearly every nation around the globe. With nine comprehensive, up-to-date volumes spanning every major world region, this in-depth reference source is one of the most thorough compilations of its kind on the market today. The *Countries, Peoples & Cultures* series is complete with specific information on over 200 countries and self-governing territories, as well as separate appendices profiling 21 types of governments currently in power and ten major world religions..."

Rowman & Littlefield released a new title in February:

- The *Complete Book of 1940s Broadway Musicals* (February 2105, 9781442245273, \$95; eBook, 9781442245280 \$94.99) by **Dan Dietz** focuses on "the shows produced on Broadway during this decade include *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Brigadoon*, *Carousel*, *Finian's Rainbow*, *Pal Joey*, *On the Town*, and *South Pacific*. Among the major performers of the decade were **Alfred Drake**, **Gene Kelly**, **Mary Martin** and **Ethel Merman**, while other talents who contributed to shows include **Irving Berlin**, **Gower Champion**, **Betty Comden**, **Adolph Green**, **Agnes de Mille**, **Lorenz Hart**, **Alan Jay...**" 🌸