Berkshire Encyclopedia of Extreme Sports (Review)

Sue Polanka
Wright State University - Main Campus, sue.polanka@wright.edu

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Adult Reference

The 50 States, 2d ed.
Ed. by Charles F. Bahmueller.

A reputable reference publisher has revised its 2000 resource The 50 States. The purpose of this resource is still "to serve the needs of students and members of the public seeking basic and up-to-date information on individual American states." In addition to revised statistical information, the volume has a new chapter on the "almost state," the District of Columbia, and expanded appendixes.

The organization of the chapters remains the same. Each chapter includes a profile of the state that contains basic data on population, geography, and other salient facts, such as the largest city, number of counties, motto, highest point, lowest point, highest recorded temperature, national parks, etc. Also included are an essay on the state's history; the major influences that have shaped the state's culture, a time line, and an annotated bibliography of print and Web resources. Following the essay portion are a map, a list of counties with their rankings (new to this edition), and a listing of all towns and cities with a population of more than 10,000. As in the first edition—and an important feature—the bulk of each chapter consists of 40 statistical tables that give demographics and vital statistics and numbers on the economy, land use, politics, health and medical care, housing, education, transportation and travel, and crime and law enforcement.

The publisher claims that many tables contain special features not found in government sources of statistics, such as state rankings in important categories and each state's share of national totals. The appendixes have grown from 4 to 36 and provide national data, data on the largest U.S. cities and counties, and a general bibliography.

The 50 States could serve reference librarians' needs, from a quick thumbnail sketch of a state to a fairly complete statistical profile. Because of the seven years between editions, the amount of information that is updated, and the collection of statistical tables in one place, the volume is a recommended purchase. —Jerry Carbone

In This Issue

It's Encyclopedia Update time, when we survey the existing general encyclopedia landscape. Once again, the encyclopedias were examined by Barbara Bibel, reference librarian at the University of California, Santa Cruz, to color code text in Wikipedia entries as a way to indicate trustworthiness. The coding is based on the past performance of contributors and editors. In these days when Wikipedia is one of the biggest threats to traditional encyclopedias, it's useful to keep in mind that no color coding is needed to tell us that we can trust content from Britannica, Grolier, and World Book.

Print Death Watch

In our August News and Views, we kicked off a discussion of the death of print reference publishing. In this September 1 issue, we shared some insights from Barbara Bibel about how print is still very much alive in public libraries. Now, Dona Helmer, librarian at College Gate Elementary School in Anchorage, Alaska, weighs in: "I must confess in my current K-6 library, reference rarely gets used by kids, never by teachers, and takes up loads of space I could use for something else. The items that are in my collection are choice—they make me feel like a librarian who can find answers. Uniformly, my kids cannot find information in a systematic, efficient manner on the computer. I don't have time to teach them, and I don't have enough computers. So where do we go from here? I think that publishers need to discover the younger market (and their librarians) and begin to publish for that market. Although teachers, librarians, and parents have created a demand; younger reference materials just aren't in the marketplace yet. Materials need to be in paperback and relatively cheap (not over $5) so I can have multiple copies and not feel bad about weeding."

Coming Up

Among the titles we're working on for October 1 are Greenwood's Class in America: An Encyclopedia, and Houghton Mifflin's Gulf's of the Americas.

—MARY ELLEN QUINN (mquinn@ala.org)


Extreme sports are about taking risks, challenging oneself to physical and mental limits, and breaking the rules of nature and sometimes society. The Berkshire Encyclopedia of Extreme Sports grew from the Berkshire Encyclopedia of World Sport (2005) and contains 114 articles covering 50 sports, more than 30 athletes, 9 places, and 17 social issues, including Extreme media, which discusses the magazines Big Brother (for skateboarders) and Blunt (for snowboarders) as well as the Jackass phenomenon.

The signed, alphabetically arranged articles are organized, factual, and contain many interesting photos. Sidebars provide supplemental information such as "Cave Diving Safety Warnings," much of it gathered from the Web. Cross-references and items for further reading are also included. About 15 articles are similar to entries in the Berkshire Encyclopedia of World Sport, but the content has been rewritten, and the sources have been updated. Among these are Hang gliding, Skateboarding, Windsurfing, and X Games. Many of the extreme sports, including Professional wrestling and Skiing, are quite popular, almost mainstream. Others are definitely extreme, such as Extreme ironing (yes, this involves a household iron) and Building, climbing on urban buildings, which is illegal.

Nearly 70 sports experts and athletes wrote content for this encyclopedia, which has a detailed (but not always thorough) index, an alphabetical list of entries, and a "Reader's Guide" grouping entries under broader topics. The fonts, page formats, and mirrored page numbers make the layout hip and unique in comparison with other print sources. This title is so extreme, it even has a disclaimer! It is recommended for all types of libraries, particularly those interested in gaining the attention of 13- to 34-year-old males. —Sue Polanka


According to the introduction, this volume is "designed to provide an introduction to Fitzgerald's work, life, and times for students and general readers as well as be a reliable ready reference." It is an updated and expanded version of F. Scott Fitzgerald from A to Z (1998).