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Encyclopedia of Disasters: Environmental Catastrophes and Human Tragedies (Review)

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The Best of History Web Sites. By Thomas Daccord. 2007. 65p. illus. Neal-Schuman, paper, $89.95 (9780810842816). — Derived from the Web portal with a similar name [http://www.besthistorysites.net], this print edition contains listings for more than 1,000 sites (mostly noncommercial) covering more than 50 areas of history. Organized in 12 thematic chapters, each entry contains the title of the site, its URL, and a descriptive and evaluative annotation. Interspersed throughout the text are black-and-white Web shots of the home pages of selected entries. The work is primarily geared for K–12 teachers, offering links to history resources as well as lesson plans, tests, activities, and other instruction-related information. Introductory chapters offer useful information on evaluating Web sites and integrating the Web into classroom instruction. Readers will also appreciate the helpful index, providing easy access to the Web site names and subjects.

This volume is somewhat complementary to the History Highway: A 21st Century Guide to Internet Resources (Sharpe, 2006), which is mostly oriented to college and graduate students and history faculty. But the latter work also offers a CD-ROM, is almost twice the length, and sells for less than half the price. The advantages and limitations of the costly print version vs. the free Web site make a recommendation a matter of arbitrary preference. The print Best of History Web Sites offers useful links to history teaching resources, enhanced annotations, and technology tips. Nevertheless, the work is a bit expensive, and some users may prefer the Web site because of its immediate navigability, even though it contains commercial ads on many pages and also lacks the useful print index. —Donald Aitschiller

The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics. By David R. Henderson. 2007. 637p. Liberty Fund, $45 (9780865976658); paper, $28 (9780865976665), 330.03. — This is essentially the third edition of The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics, which originally came out in 1993 as The Fortune Encyclopedia of Economics and was updated in 2002 with the new name. The 2002 version of The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics is available for free online from the Library of Economics and Liberty [http://www.econlib.org/library/CEE.html] for those who do not have the means of purchasing the newest edition. The entries are arranged in two sections: the first for article entries, and the second for biographical entries. These sections are ordered alphabetically and include 160 articles and almost 100 biographies of prominent economists. Entries vary in length from a couple of paragraphs to a couple of pages. Each article entry includes information on the author who wrote the article and a short bibliography for further reading. The biographical entries include a list of selected works of the economist being discussed. A short appendix lists winners of the Nobel Prize in economics, chairs of the Council of Economic Advisors, and presidents of the American Economic Association.

Compared to the 2002 edition, this one has approximately 30 more entries, and more than half of the entries have been thoroughly updated and revised. This edition also includes a new introduction and index. The encyclopedia contains a wealth of information that makes complex economics understandable in straightforward articles written by a variety of knowledgeable authors, ranging from Nobel Prize winner Gary Becker to financial columnists and numerous professors from around the country. A library that does not have this book in its collection could, of course, use the 2002 version online for free; but at such a reasonable price, this volume should be mandatory for any library supporting economics classes and is recommended for all academic and large public libraries. —Christy Donaldson


Disasters—among them earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, floods, pandemic illnesses, landslides, and terrorist attacks—have had a significant impact on the world’s people and environment throughout the last 2,000 years. Gunn, an author and professor emeritus in geography and geology, explores both natural and human-induced disasters in this set. The disasters were selected based upon three criteria: the number of casualties, damage done to homes or structures, and long-term consequences. Gunn’s book Unnatural Disasters (Greenwood, 2003) provides case studies of 34 human-induced environmental catastrophes, and information on most of these catastrophes has been thoroughly updated for this new encyclopedia.

The work examines 184 disasters, arranged chronologically from prehistory through the present day (Greensburg, Kansas, tornado, May 4, 2007). Each entry includes a brief overview and details of location, time, and type of disaster. A three- to four-page description of each disaster provides explanations of causes and recommendations for dealing with similar events. References for further study and black-and-white illustrations and photographs are found throughout the set. A chronological table of contents, thematic guide, and index provide multiple access points to the entries. Appendices include lists of worldwide earthquakes, largest U.S. natural disasters, world’s deadliest disasters, and scales for measuring natural disasters.

In the extensive introduction, Gunn notes that “understanding of disasters anywhere in the world is vital to the preservation of our global environment.” The focus on understanding causes and consequences makes this a recommended title for academic and public libraries. —Sue Polanka


In 1927 the first book on gang life, Frederic Thrasher’s The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago, was published. Only in the last 20 years, as gangs have spread from the inner cities to the suburbs and beyond, has the study of gangs become more than just a specialization in sociology and criminology. For this new encyclopedia, two editors and approximately 60 other contributors have written 82 signed entries exploring gangs and public policies and programs designed to deal in a positive manner with the problem of gangs. The alphabetical entries range from one-half page (Non-racist skinheads) to 12 pages (Mexican gangs). Words in bold type indicate a separate entry in the encyclopedia. A list of references and suggested readings at the end of each entry leads the reader to more in-depth works. The preface and introduction set the stage for the detailed overview of gangs that follows. An index completes the volume.

The introduction highlights four areas that are covered in the encyclopedia: gang theory, gang practices, gang types, and gang expansion. Examples of entries on gang theory are Differential association theory and Subcultural theories of gangs. Gang practices include such topics as Gang clothing, Gang graffiti, and Gang symbols. Gang types include Gangs in U.S. schools and Gangs in prisons; ethnic gangs (e.g., The Black Hand and Jewish gangs and gangsters); and gender gangs (e.g., The Latin Queens). Gang expansion is covered in such entries as Australian youth gangs and Transnational gangs. A list of entries and a guide to related topics precede the alphabetical entries.

This first encyclopedia on the subject of gangs definitely delivers what the editors intended: an orientation to the subject, a stimulation of curiosity, and guidance for further investigation of the subject by the reader. Recommended for academic and large public libraries. —Kaye Talley


Revised and expanded, Johnson’s Encyclopedia of Native Tribes of North America is a delight both to the eye and pocketbook. Arranged by cultural and geographical area (e.g., “North- eastern Woodlands,” “Southwest”), the volume contains brief entries on tribes, confederacies, and other groups. A chart at the beginning of each geographical-cultural section lists the various language families and tribes.

The indexing, greatly improved over that of the 1999 edition, includes tribe names, illustrations, and maps; and the cross-referencing between entries is also greatly improved. Appendices list the powwow trails, museums, Native American tribes by populations, locations of reservations by state, and princi-