



RECOMMENDED REFERENCE BOOKS FOR

Small and Medium-sized
Libraries and
Media Centers 1988

Bohdan S. Wynar, editor



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Libraries Unlimited, Inc. • Englewood, Colorado

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Journals Cited

FORM OF CITATION

BL
Choice
CLJ
C&RL
EL
JAL
JOYS
LAR
LJ
RBB
RQ
SBF
SLJ
SLMQ
TN
VOYA
WLB

JOURNAL TITLE

Booklist
Choice
Canadian Library Journal
College & Research Libraries
Emergency Librarian
Journal of Academic Librarianship
Journal of Youth Services in Libraries
Library Association Record
Library Journal
Reference Books Bulletin
RQ
Science Books & Films
School Library Journal
School Library Media Quarterly
Top of the News
Voice of Youth Advocates
Wilson Library Bulletin

Introduction

Recommended Reference Books for Small and Medium-sized Libraries and Media Centers, now in its eighth volume, is designed to assist smaller libraries in the systematic selection of suitable reference books for their collections.

The number of reference books published each year in the United States and Canada has been increasing while library budgets have been shrinking. These circumstances necessitate the most careful evaluation of materials to be purchased, especially in the area of reference materials, which tend to be expensive. It is hoped that *Recommended Reference Books* will assist smaller libraries in this evaluation process by designating an annual selection of the most substantial titles in all subject areas suitable for small and medium-sized libraries and media centers.

The first volume of *Recommended Reference Books*, published in 1981, reviewed 504 titles selected from the 1981 edition of *American Reference Books Annual*; the second included 533; the third 506; the fourth 506; the fifth 562; the sixth 567; and the seventh 577. The 517 titles reviewed in this eighth edition were chosen by the editor as the most valuable reference titles published during 1987 for use in smaller libraries. These titles were selected from the 1988 edition of *ARBA*, which provides reviews of all reference books published in the United States during a single year. The total number of books reviewed in *ARBA* 88 is 1,809. In the 19 volumes of *ARBA* published since 1970, in total, 32,427 titles have been reviewed. *ARBA* has traditionally reviewed foreign reference titles only if they have an exclusive distributor in the United States; foreign title coverage has generally been restricted to English-language publications from Great Britain, and occasionally Australia or India. This year, as last year, *ARBA*'s coverage of Canadian publications has been expanded to include many that do not have U.S. distributors, achieving substantial cover-

age of Canadian reference publications. Since *ARBA* provides comprehensive coverage of all reference books, not just selected or recommended titles, many of which are of interest only to large academic and public libraries, we felt the need to offer an "abridged" version of *ARBA* especially designed for smaller libraries of all types.

Titles reviewed in *Recommended Reference Books* include dictionaries, encyclopedias, indexes, directories, bibliographies, guides, atlases, gazetteers, and other types of ready-reference tools published in this country, as well as foreign titles that have an exclusive distributor in the United States. General encyclopedias that are updated annually, yearbooks, almanacs, indexing and abstracting services, directories, and other annuals are included on a selective basis. In other words, annuals suitable for use by smaller libraries that were not reviewed in *ARBA* 88 will be reviewed in subsequent volumes. *Recommended Reference Books* will systematically review such serial publications, and within the next few years all important annual publications, including general encyclopedias, will be critically examined. Government publications are reviewed on a highly selective basis since another Libraries Unlimited work, *Government Reference Books*, biennially provides the library profession with comprehensive coverage of government reference publications. Excluded from *Recommended Reference Books* are regional guides in the areas of botany and zoology, reference titles in the areas of literature and fine arts dealing with individual authors or artists, and reference books in genealogy.

All titles included in this volume are coded with the letters C, P, or S, indicating that a given reference work is a recommended purchase for smaller college libraries (C), public libraries (P), or school media centers (S). Obviously, such recommendations are somewhat

arbitrary, since individual institutions vary in the size of their collections, reference needs, clientele, and budgetary allocations. Nevertheless, these codes should provide some guidance in selection for particular types of libraries.

Although this is a selection of "recommended titles," critical comments appearing in the original *ARBA* reviews have been retained in this volume. *Recommended Reference Books* contains original and unabridged reviews from the nineteenth volume of *ARBA*, providing critical appraisals of the titles, since even recommended works may be deficient in one respect or another. In many cases, the reviews evaluate and compare a work in relation to other titles of a similar nature. All reviews provide complete bibliographic and ordering information. References to reviews published in periodicals (i.e., *Library Journal*, *Wilson Library Bulletin*, *School Library Journal*, *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, and *Reference Books Bulletin*) during the year of coverage are appended to the reviews.

The 517 titles offered for consideration in this eighth volume of *Recommended Reference Books* were reviewed by over 200 subject specialists at libraries and universities throughout the United States and Canada. All reviews are signed as a matter of editorial policy.

The present volume contains a total of 36 chapters, the same as in *Recommended Reference Books* 87. There continue to be four major subdivisions. "General Reference Works," arranged alphabetically, is subdivided by form: bibliographies, biographies, encyclopedias, handbooks, and so on. With the remaining three parts, chapters, arranged alphabetically, are organized by topic. Thus, under "Humanities," the reader will find, for example, chapters entitled "Fine Arts," "Literature," "Music," and "Religion."

Most chapters are subdivided in a way that reflects the arrangement strategy of the entire volume: First there is a section on general works, then there is a topical breakdown. In the chapter entitled "Literature," for example, "General Works" is followed by "Children's Literature," "Drama," "Fiction," "Poetry," and "National Literature." And the latter is subdivided further. The section entitled "American Literature" is again subdivided. It is followed by sections on other national literatures from Arabic to Spanish. Subdivisions are based on the amount of material available on a given topic and will vary from year to year.

Recommended Reference Books has been favorably reviewed in *Library Journal*, *Booklist*, *The Book Report*, *Wilson Library Bulletin*, *School Library Media Quarterly*, *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, and *Reference Books Bulletin*. For example, *Emergency Librarian* (November/December 1987) referred to the 1987 edition of *Recommended Reference Books* as "once again, a reliable source of reviews suitable for school resource centers and smaller college and public libraries." It is hoped that this eighth volume of *Recommended Reference Books* will continue to serve as a valuable acquisitions tool for those small libraries, which, due to budget restrictions, must be certain that all titles purchased serve their particular needs.

We would like to express our gratitude to our many contributors whose reviews appear in this volume. The contributors are listed on the pages following this introduction. We would also like to thank the following members of the Libraries Unlimited staff who were instrumental in the preparation of *Recommended Reference Books*: Anna Grace Patterson, David Loertscher, Carmel Huestis, Kay Minnis, Cassandra McCullough, Patti Leach, Susan Penney, and Sharon Kincaide.

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