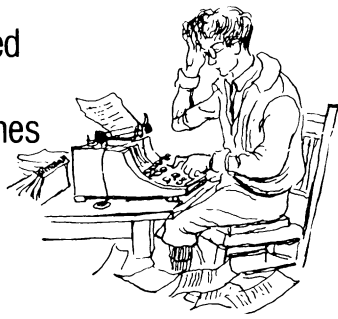


THE SOURCE

edited
and compiled
by
David J. Jones



Searchers for hire

In the United Kingdom, as elsewhere, the business of the online searcher who will search databases anytime for anyone for a charge, is growing apace.

In a directory of online search services published last year by Aslib 88 such services are listed, ranging in size from the British Library to small specialist trade organisations. Each entry gives addresses and phone numbers, availability, coverage, services used, charges, staffing, information on backup services and the date the service began. There are indications of the speed of service, the number of searches which the organisation performs annually and whether enquirers are welcome to sit at the terminal.

The index indicates which services offer an SDI facility, which will allow outsiders to use their terminals and which services use which hosts. Particular subject specialisations are also listed.

J. B. Deunette's *UK online search services* was published last year on behalf of the Online Information Centre by Aslib. It costs £9.50 (£12.00 overseas). (ISBN 0 85142 141 5).

Reference book feast

Two of the swarm of reference works published recently by Libraries Unlimited are Christine Gehrt Wynar's *Guide to reference books for school media centers* and Mary Alice Deveny's *Recommended reference books in paperback*.

Christine Wynar's work is a second edition: it is the result of a thorough revision and updating of the 1973 edition and the

1976 supplement, both of which were well received critically in the United States at the time.

The 1936 entries in this edition cut a wide swathe through all subjects within the curriculum of the American elementary and secondary school. Some emphasis is given to educational media sources and selection aids (around 10 percent of the text). As one would expect, most of the materials described are published in the United States. The only Australian item I could trace through the index was *Australian books in print*, and that only mentioned in passing under entries for *Books in print*.

The entries in Wynar's guide sometimes include quite detailed evaluative descriptions, prices, LC numbers and references to published reviews of the works in question. The selection overall is good, and the work could be a useful selection tool and aide-memoire for larger public libraries and college libraries.

Christine Gehrt Wynar's *Guide to reference books for school media centers*, published in 1981 by Libraries Unlimited, costs US\$33.00. (ISBN 0 87287 256 4).

Deveny's work lists reference works in paperback format which are '1) currently available; 2) of superior reference value or a unique source of information; and 3) of comparatively moderate price'.

You may recall Bohdan Wynar's earlier *Reference books in paperback: an annotated guide*, the second edition of which was published by Libraries Unlimited in 1976. Such works are intended to help eke out funds in the generally expensive area of reference book purchasing.

Prices for works listed in the new *Recommended reference books in paperback* range from US\$0.95 to \$75.00, a far cry from the US\$5.00 upper limit which Wynar set for inclusion in his 1972 edition. This reflects increased coverage, not just inflation.

The 950 full entries (and hundreds of additional subsumed entries) each present critical comments, prices and references to reviews elsewhere, in the familiar Libraries Unlimited style. Again unashamed American emphasis in content is evident.

Although this work must be a boon for smaller North American collections, I can't help feeling that an Australian library seeking reference material in paperback would

be better served by using Sheehy and/or Walford and indulging in the admittedly sometimes frustrating process of discovering whether particular titles are available in paperback, using standard in-print listings.

Mary Alice Deveny's *Recommended reference books in paperback* was published by Libraries Unlimited in 1981. It costs US\$22.50 in hardcover and is not unexpectedly also available in paperback. (ISBN 0 87287 269 6 hardback; 0 87287 279 3 paper).

The 'best' dictionary

Braithwaite and Taylor have the distinction of having won the Queen's Award for Export Achievement in 1981. They also have the distinction of having ignored most of the helpful advice offered to them before they set up their mail order business and quarterly buying guide, the *Good book guide*.

They didn't specialise. They did handle paperbacks. They do list 'cultural' titles. And now they have a wide readership for their *Guide*, and expanding sales, particularly in areas remote from good bookselling centres.

In November last year the *Good book guide* issued a supplementary special survey on dictionaries, which is well worth having a look at as a possible selection aid. This 'independent consumer survey' examines 35 dictionaries of the English language, generally restricting its scope to dictionaries currently available in the UK. In its eight pages the survey can really only skim through the salient points about selecting a new dictionary, describing what's available and comparing, but it does manage to cram in some useful pointers.

Copies of the dictionary survey can be obtained from Braithwaite and Taylor Ltd, PO Box 400, Havelock Terrace, London SW8 4AU. It costs a modest 50p. Sample copies of the *Good book guide* are also available.

Source material wanted

This column is an excellent means of publicising your bibliography, directory, guide to the literature or other reference work. You may also get two bites of the cherry: a brief notice in *The Source* and later a full review in *InCite* or in the *Australian Library Journal*.

Whenever submitting items for notice or review, don't forget to include details of price and source of supply, if not available from the normal book trade. □

Information Retrieval

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