

## **Favorite Reference Books for Students**

*compiled by Janet Eckert, Youth Services Consultant, WMRLS*

What are librarians' favorite reference tools that best serve the information needs of students in grades 1 through 12? I recently posed this question to members of several email distribution lists that focus upon the library service to youth - the MASSYAC, MSLMA, and PUBYAC lists. I am very impressed not only by the wealth of information that these librarians imparted to me but also by their generous spirit of sharing. I thank them all!

Listed below, in alphabetical order by title, are the reference titles that librarians recommended to me. Whenever possible, I list the price of the resource along with the publisher and publication date.

**A To Zoo; Subject Access To Children's Picture Books** by Carolyn and John Lima [6th edition, Bowker, 2001, \$75]. I love **A To Zoo** for the following reasons:

It is so easy to show people how to use it.

We always have teachers and parents looking for picture books on certain subjects.

It is actually faster than doing subject searches in C/W MARS.

If we don't own the title, through C/W MARS, we can quickly confirm who does and immediately put a hold on it.

It is so handy at holiday time.

I have helped many a college student get a "A" on their themed lesson plans, using it, which brings me to reason #7 ...

I get more thank you's inspired by **A To Zoo** than from any other reference tool!

*~ Jeanne Hofmann, Agawam Public Library*

**Animal Encyclopedias** - The reference items I use the most with children are animal encyclopedias. They are useful when a child is doing a report on an obscure animal or all the animal books are checked out. We have three sets. They are:

- **Amazing Animals Of The World** [Grolier Educational Corporation, 1995]. One page of information and color picture about each animal.
- **Endangered Wildlife And Plants Of The World** [Marshall Cavendish, 2001, 12 volumes, \$459.95] Extensive information, map showing habitat, most with color picture.
- **International Wildlife Encyclopedia** [Marshall Cavendish, 2002 - 3<sup>rd</sup> edition will be published in January, 2002] Similar to Endangered Wildlife and Plants of the World but only includes animals.

*~ Linda Allen, Sno-Regional Library System, Monroe Branch, Monroe Washington*

**Ask Jeeves for Kids** – <http://www.ajkids.com/> - “Everyday questions, homework help, and fun!”

*~ Karen Kemp, Ritter Memorial Library, Lunenburg*

**Career Discovery Encyclopedia** [Ferguson Publishing, 2000, \$139.95] - Helpful in giving easy to use information for some massive school assignments. *~ Pat Vasilik, Clifton Public Library, Clifton, New Jersey*

**Chemical Elements: From Carbon to Krypton** [U\*X\*L, 1998, \$105] - Helpful in giving easy to use information for some massive school assignments. *~ Pat Vasilik, Clifton Public Library, Clifton, New Jersey*

**Chronicle Of The 20th Century** [DK Multimedia, 1998, CD ROM, \$59.95; Hardcover ] -- attractive format, readable, short annotations. *~ Carol Messerschmidt, Taconic High School Resource Center, Pittsfield*

**Courtroom Drama : 120 of the World's Most Notable Trials** [Visible Ink Press, 1997]

The 3 volume set has turned out to be a great cross-curricular resource. History students find it useful for their American and World History, Government, and Facing History and Ourselves courses. Science students often need information about the Galileo and Scopes Trials. Literature students are interested in Joan of Arc, Thomas Moore, and Peter Wright. Trials are listed alphabetically, chronologically, and by category ( War Crimes, Murder, Freedom of Speech, etc). There's a glossary of "Words to Know" at the front. Each case is noted for its significance, is succinctly described, and is accompanied by "Suggestions for Further Reading". I recommend it highly. ~ *Rosemary McCarthy, Winthrop High School Library Media Center*

**Crimes And Punishment** [Stuttman, 1994]--interesting format, articles long enough to be useful. ~ *Carol Messerschmidt, Taconic High School Resource Center, Pittsfield*

**CultureGrams** by Brigham Young Kennedy Center [Ferguson Publishing, 2001, \$97.30] - One of my favorite reference works is CultureGrams which I use with students as a Sterling Example of how sometimes the best resource for an assignment is NOT a website! This set has almost everything you need to know about a country succinctly in one place. It is great for "country" assignments! ~ *MSLMA member*

**Dorling Kindersley World Atlas** edited by Andrew Heritage. [DK Publishing, 2000, \$50.00]-- This colorful atlas includes many maps. Its presentation is very useful and appealing to young people. ~ *Mary Ann Tourjee, Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield*

**Encarta** – <http://encarta.msn.com/> - [available both online and in CD ROM formats] - multimedia encyclopedia - has pictures of almost everything. I think Bill Gates bought the Betteman Archives) ~ *Deb MacInnis Edgartown Free Public Library*

**Encyclopedia of Family Health** [Marshall Cavendish, 1998]--informative, easy to readable, good illustrations, basic dictionary format. ~ *Carol Messerschmidt, Taconic High School Resource Center, Pittsfield*

**Encyclopedia of Pop, Rock and Soul** by Irwin Stambler [St. Martin's Press, 1989, \$35.00]-- good photography, information more substantial than above listing ~ *Carol Messerschmidt, Taconic High School Resource Center, Pittsfield*

**Encyclopedia of World Biography** [Gale, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Volume 7, 1998, \$69.50]-- substantial information, readable, attractive format ~ *Carol Messerschmidt, Taconic High School Resource Center, Pittsfield*

**Endangered Species** [Grolier, Inc, \$105] - Helpful in giving easy to use information for some massive school assignments. ~ *Pat Vasilik, Clifton Public Library, Clifton, New Jersey*

**Explorers & Discoverers: From Alexander the Great to Sally Ride** [U\*X\*L, 1994+, 7 volumes] - Helpful in giving easy to use information for some massive school assignments. ~ *Pat Vasilik, Clifton Public Library, Clifton, New Jersey*

**Gale Databases** ~ This is fairly new to our library and I'm hooked on it. [Editor's note: Visit the WMRLS databases website – <http://www.wmrls.org/services/data.html> to review the many databases available to WMRLS member libraries.] It was purchased by the library system we belong to. ~ *Diane Raschke, Clintonville Public Library, Clintonville, Wisconsin*

**Google** – <http://www.google.com> - recommended Internet search engine ~ *Karen Kemp, Ritter Memorial Library, Lunenburg*

**Great American Trials** edited by Edward W. Knappman [Gale, 1994, \$105.75]-- well-presented information leading to further investigation. ~ *Carol Messerschmidt, Taconic High School Resource Center, Pittsfield*

**Grolier Online.** I have purchased 5 of their online encyclopedias, **Encyclopedia Americana, Grolier Multimedia, New Book of Knowledge, New Book of Popular Science, and Lands and People**. Patrons can search each individually or choose a global search which searches all five simultaneously. Articles are linked to web sites (which are checked before being placed on the database and so are much safer for students than a general search of the web), periodical articles, related articles, maps, and more. Patrons can e-mail articles to themselves or interested peers. Remote access is available so patrons can search from their homes. The price is quite affordable. And the variety of encyclopedias appeals to a wide range of interests and reading levels. There are also current events links, curriculum links, teacher's guides and a wealth of other very useful information. Patrons can even do a cultural comparison of two countries! It's great! ~ *Susan Hoar, Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School, Upton.*

**High School Hub** - <http://highschoolhub.org/hub/hub.cfm> - a great website for high school and even middle or junior high. Scroll down to reference sources. Where can you find more? The site's home page describes its goals as follows: "The **High School Hub** is a noncommercial portal to excellent free online academic resources for high school students. It features learning activities, an ongoing teen poetry contest, a reference collection, college information, and subject guides for English, mathematics, science, social studies, world languages, arts, health, and technology." ~ *MSLMA list member*

**Index to Collective Biographies for Young Readers** [Bowker, 1988, out of print) - indexes many collective biographies, and includes a listing of people by career/hobbies/interests in the back. It has led us to "hidden" information on many occasions when nothing else could be found. ~ *Mary Ann Tourjee, Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield*

**KidsClick** - <http://www.kidsclick.org> - a lifesaver in finding age appropriate Internet resources for the elementary. A huge help for those teachers that don't collaborate ahead of time and are looking for information last minute but don't want to 'teach' research skills. ~ *Chris Beardsley, Darrow School, New Lebanon, New York (formerly of Westfield Public Schools)*

**Kingfisher Illustrated History of the World** [Kingfisher Books, 1993] Traces the history of the world, from the ancient world of 40,000 B.C. to the early 1990s, covering such aspects as war, society, religion, people, buildings, arts, science, and communication. ~ *Deb MacInnis, Edgartown Free Public Library*

**Lands and Peoples** -- [Grolier Educational Corporation, 1999, available online and in book format] This set gives an overview of the major countries of the world including geography, government, and culture. ~ *Mary Ann Tourjee, Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield*

**Man, Myth and Magic** [Marshall Cavendish, \$169.50]-- superficial treatment of 'weird' subjects, students love it, leads to further reading. ~ *Carol Messerschmidt, Taconic High School Resource Center, Pittsfield*

**National Geographic Index** [National Geographic Society] What hasn't **National Geographic** written about? ~ *Deb MacInnis Edgartown Free Public Library*

**The New Book of Popular Science** -- [Grolier Education Corporation, available online and in book format]. This set gives several pages of discussion to many scientific concepts, discoveries, theories, and events. Often it contains information that is not otherwise available in our collection. ~ *Mary Ann Tourjee, Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield*

**Novels For Students : Presenting Analysis, Context And Criticism On Commonly Studied Novels** (Gale Group, 1999, \$92.50. Novels for Students, Vol 6) My favorite sources are the "For Students" series from Gale. (Novels for Students, Poetry for Students, etc.) They are fantastic for literary research and contain everything a student needs to have a comprehensive foundation for a research paper. ~ *Sharon Hamer, Methuen High School*

**Occupational Outlook Handbook** [U.S. Dept. of Labor, 2000, \$18.95]-- concise information about careers. ~ *Carol Messerschmidt, Taconic High School Resource Center, Pittsfield*

**Ohio Public Library Information Network** - <http://www.oplin.lib.oh.us> - My favorite reference tool (besides **World Book**, of course) is **Ohio Public Library Information Network** and the link to the Kids Page. There are wonderful sites throughout this state sponsored website and the Kid's Page is awesome. The link for tree and leaf identification has been a godsend as have several other sites. While I try hard to work first with the printed page and then turn to the internet to show the kids that books are still their first line of defense when it comes to school work. The OPLIN site has much to offer. ~ *Traci Welch Moritz, Putnam County District Library, Ottawa, Ohio*

**Reading In Series : A Selection Guide To Books For Children** edited by Catherine Barr. [Bowker, 1999] I often photocopy the pages listing the particular series the patron asked about. That way, they can check off which ones they've read. Most used with parents and kids and most requested series are Redwall, Chronicles of Narnia, Boxcar Children and Hardy Boys. ~ *Cindi Carey, Lacey Timberland Library, Lacey, Washington*

**Recreating The Past: A Guide To American And World Historical Fiction For Children And Young Adults** by Lynda G. Adamson. [Greenwood Publishing Group, 1994, \$62.95] **Booklist** reviewed this book as follows: "This book belongs on all professional shelves in elementary through high schools where it will help identify sequels and aid in collection building. As always with a well-done bibliography, there's the joy of meeting old friends as well as the challenge of attempting to identify those books omitted". ~ *Gayle Richardson, Seattle Public Library, Washington*

**Rolling Stone History of Rock and Roll** [Random House, 1992, \$32.95]--good photography, superficial information, high interest level. ~ *Carol Messerschmidt, Taconic High School Resource Center, Pittsfield*

**Scholastic Home work Reference Series** by Anne Zeman and Kate Kelly. [Scholastic Reference, @\$8.95 per title] Each title in this series begins with the title **Everything You Need to Know About ...** and focuses upon English, Geography, Math, Science, American History, or World History homework. The books have basic facts in an easy to follow format. They are aimed at 4th to 6th grade, but I have used them with younger and older children. Today I used the Geography book to find information on landforms for a third grader. ~ *Beth Bell, St. Andrews Regional Branch Public Library, Charleston, South Carolina*

Western Massachusetts Regional Library System  
**Reference Books for Students ~ Librarians' Favorites**

**The Storyteller's Sourcebook: A Subject, Title, and Motif Index to Folklore Collections for Children** by Margaret Read MacDonald [ Neal-Schuman, 1982] - We often have adults requesting folktales they heard in their youths. One lady in particular is an ex-teacher. Using this sourcebook and its newer edition, we can often track the story down. I am amazed at how often we are able to find what we are looking for. We use a lot of on-line reference that we used to hunt down in book form, such as **Lands & Peoples**, encyclopedias, and my all-time favorite because it's always "in" is **The Biography Resource Center** from Gale. ~ *Cindi Carey, Lacey Timberland Library, Lacey, Washington*

**Student Discovery Encyclopedia** [World Book, Inc, annual, 13 volumes, \$299] - great lower level encyclopedia. ~ *Joan C. Powers, Undermountain Elementary School, Sheffield*

**U\*X\*L Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes** [U\*X\*L, 1999, \$175 for set] It's at a younger level than other encyclopedias regarding this topic. ~ *Sue Palmieri, Groton Public Library*

**Wildlife and Plants of the World** [Marshall Cavendish, 1998] It usually has at least 2 pages about each topic, with all the basics regarding location, size of growth, and other important facts. It used to focus just on wildlife, but has added several new volumes, now has 17 and includes different types of plants. ~ *Sue Palmieri, Groton Public Library*

**The World: Afghanistan to Zimbabwe** [Rand McNally, \$49.95] information about countries in an attractive dictionary format. ~ *Carol Messerschmidt, Taconic High School Resource Center, Pittsfield*

**World Almanac** [World Almanac Books, 2000] **Guinness Book Of World Records** [Bantam books, ] **Merriam-Webster's Biographical Dictionary** [Merriam-Webster, 1995] are among my favorites. ~ *Sue Palmieri, Groton Public Library*

**World Book Encyclopedia** [World Book-Childcraft International, \$49.95 online; \$799 in book format ]-- a standard part of our reference collection ~ *Mary Ann Tourjee, Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield*

**Writers for Young Adults** [Supplement 1, Scribner, 2000] and **Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults** [Gale Group, Volume 10, 2000 \$105.75] - Both are great for author research. The definition of young adult writers include Byars and Alexander. They cover 5th grade and up ~ *Deb MacInnis Edgartown Free Public Library*