

REVIEWS

Know it all, find it fast. Bob Duckett, Peter Walker & Christinea Donnelly. 3rd edition. London, Facet, 2008. ISBN 978-1-85604-652-7. £34.95 (£27.96 to CILIP members).

Many readers will need no recommendation of this 'A-Z source guide for the enquiry desk' as they will have bought both the previous editions and this new one, which has been published four years after the second edition. Bob Duckett discussed the compilation of *KIAFIF* in the Winter 2005 issue of *Refer* (pp. 12-14) and asked for feedback from information practitioners. Charles Toase reviewed the first edition in his inimitable style in 'Reference books you may have missed' in the Autumn 2002 issue (pp. 17-18).

The book has rightly earned plaudits for its practical approach, helpful hints and guidance for 'frontline staff working with the general public on library enquiry desks'. The 'Tips and pitfalls' under most headings are sound and worldly-wise. *KIAFIF* is ideal as an aid to training as well as an indication of key sources and approaches for answering the varied questions library staff have to deal with. But one wonders just how much training in using resources frontline staff now get.

Reliance on *KIAFIF* alone can be dangerous as the amount of context and explanation within the different subjects varies. Anyone dealing with company information needs to know about the different kinds of companies and how their status affects the amount of information to be found. The Companies section usefully describes six kinds of companies and mentions sole traders and partnerships. If looking for Acts & Regulations, the explanation is much more limited: white and green papers are briefly distinguished, but a relatively common type of enquiry relates to legislation still going through Parliament and there is no explanation of bills. The electronic sources for Acts lead to the original versions as enacted, with no reference either here or under Law to the *Statute law database*, which is the official revised edition of legislation.

The 165 subject headings include some new to this edition (Death, Funerals & Bereavement, Police & Security). They are mostly fairly broad and may contain more than expected, though the index reveals topics not found in the main alphabetical sequence and cross references lead to related entries. Election Results includes a useful sub-section on electoral registers that explains the difference between the full and edited register, but either here or under Family History it might be useful to know that the British Library has the national collection of electoral registers since 1832.

The sources listed are mainly UK or even English. International coverage is understandably limited, though European Information and Companies – International go beyond UK sources and a number of American books and websites can be found throughout the volume. Despite the importance of EU legislation within UK law, coverage of EU law is very limited with just a passing mention of EUR-Lex (and the EU doesn't feature under 'Other

jurisdictions' within Law).

There are occasional glitches: two different URLs for COPAC; the same title ascribed to Richmond House and Richard House Publications on facing pages; the Devolved government sub-section of Government includes sources that should be under Local government and relies on the Carlton Publishing directories with no URLs for the devolved parliaments and assemblies or governments. Parliament is subsumed under Government without even a subsection or explanation of its role and wealth of valuable information. There is some repetition despite the general conciseness: the information on Companies House on pages 120, 122 and 124 is almost identical, for instance. Some weaknesses in the first edition noted by Charles Toase persist: the lists of buildings under Architecture & Planning are purely for England, though the Pevsner Architectural Guides cover Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Despite some weaknesses, there is much to treasure in this new edition of *KJAFIF* and it is an essential source for anyone dealing with enquiries. Buy it if you have not already done so.

The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography revisited

There is a temptation to regard major reference works as unchanging, so it is instructive to return to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* four years after I reviewed the launch of this replacement for the venerable DNB (*Refer* Winter 2005, pp. 7-11). It is a source which has become much more widely available in public and academic libraries thanks to licensing agreements, giving a large proportion of the population access to the online edition through library membership.

On publication ODNB covered the lives of just under 55,000 people of all periods who had died before the end of 2000. There have been three updates a year to the online edition since 2005, adding 1900 lives. Just over half are entries for men and women who died between 2001 and 2005 (these are in the January update each year). Although they are available online, there has been no print version until now; the first printed supplement to the original sixty volumes will appear in March 2009 with the lives of 819 people who died between 2001 and 2004. They include people from all walks of life: Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, Roy Jenkins, Barbara Castle, Spike Milligan, Dame Ninette de Valois, ten Nobel prizewinners in the sciences and less familiar individuals like Frank Pantridge, inventor of the portable heart defibrillator, and Barry Bucknell, who pioneered DIY programmes on television.

The other two updates each year add biographies of people from all periods up to the late twentieth century. ODNB has continued to review its coverage of earlier lives and has developed a thematic approach. The May 2008 update, for instance, highlighted garden designers and landscape architects from the eighteenth century on, while the October 2008 release added gardeners notable for plant cultivation. There is an ongoing project to provide a complete sequence of lives of the early bishops from the Norman Conquest to the Reformation.