

CHAPTER 1

Initial Overview Sources: Specialized Encyclopedias

A MAJOR PROBLEM THAT RESEARCHERS INEVITABLY HAVE WITH any Internet search engine is that finding something quickly within the first two or three screens of retrievals does nothing to give them any sense of “the shape of the elephant” of their topic. With Web search engines you can never tell what or how much you are missing, nor can you judge the importance of what is in front of you in comparison to (possibly) better retrievals from alternative sources. The best solution, or at least partial solution, to this problem provided within the Internet itself is Wikipedia. The latter, being a kind of universal encyclopedia, has the virtue of providing concise overviews of just about any subject. It’s a quick way to see the basic facts about your topic—to gain what the Wikipedia contributors deem to be overview information.

I am not going to provide any elaborate criticisms of Wikipedia; I frequently use it myself in situations that do not require academic documentation or footnoting. The latter concern, however, is very important within college or professional environments: you cannot cite Wikipedia as a source in student or professional writings because its articles, being subject to continual modification, are not stable; what you cite today may not be there next week, let alone years from now. (While it is technically possible to call up earlier versions of the same article, the fact that the earlier versions had to be changed is in itself good reason to avoid citing them.) Moreover, those who make the modifications sometimes introduce particular biases for which more formal editorial procedures would compensate. Often the best experts on particular subjects simply don’t bother to correct (or even notice to begin with) what Wikipedia may say on their subjects—which means that those who do bother may have peculiar interests or agendas to promote. Nonetheless, Wikipedia is

indeed often a very good source for getting an initial overview of basic information on an unfamiliar topic, especially in comparison to an overwhelming retrieval of search engine hits.

STARTING POINTS BEYOND WIKIPEDIA

Other starting-point sources are available in libraries, however, that are frequently far superior. Two databases for identifying initial overview articles deserve particular emphasis:

- ***Reference Universe***. This is a subscription file published by Paratext (Stone Ridge, VA) that is an index to all of the individual articles in about 45,000 specialized subject encyclopedias and other reference sources from 750 publishers; coverage extends back to 1980. This database also links directly to full texts of the articles supplied by other sources (e.g., *SAGE Knowledge*, *Oxford Reference*, *Elsevier's ScienceDirect*, *CREDO Reference*) if your library already has separate subscriptions to these databases.
- ***Web of Science***. This is a subscription database from Thomson Reuters. It indexes high-quality journal articles from about 13,500 academic journals, worldwide, in all subject areas. (Don't be misled by the word "Science" in its title; it also covers social sciences and arts and humanities journals.) What is particularly important for initial overview purposes is that it has a search-limitation feature that enables you to zero in immediately on "literature review" articles in any subject area—those that try to present a state-of-the-art summary of current knowledge on whatever the topic may be. (This database will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters 6 and 8.)

Although *Reference Universe* indexes many kinds of reference publications (e.g., handbooks, histories, guides, and sourcebooks), it is particularly useful in indexing individual articles in specialized subject encyclopedias. Most students are familiar with a few general sets such as *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *World Book*, or *Encyclopedia Americana* (and, of course, Wikipedia), but very few realize how many thousands of other encyclopedias exist.

ADVANTAGES OF SPECIALIZED ENCYCLOPEDIAS

One major advantage of specialized encyclopedias is that their articles will not change from one week to the next, and so you can cite them with confidence in scholarly papers.

A second advantage is that articles appearing in these published sets have gone through editorial vetting or peer review in ways that are more formal than those at work on the open Internet. Indeed, many of these articles are signed rather than published anonymously.

A third advantage is that if you can find articles from several different specialized encyclopedias—those that provide a depth of coverage well beyond that of the general sets—and compare them to each other, then, right there, you are beginning to get a good overview your topic in a way that solves the problem created by Internet searching and also takes you considerably beyond the reach of Wikipedia articles. For example, a student interested in “globalization” would find articles on that topic, from a wide variety of unanticipated perspectives, in all of the following sources:

Encyclopedia of Religious Revivals in America
Encyclopedia of Community
Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology
Encyclopedia of Communication and Information
Berkshire Encyclopedia of World History
Encyclopedia of Evolution
Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion
Encyclopedia of Management
Encyclopedia of Information Science and Technology
Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy
Encyclopedia of Democracy
Globalization: Encyclopedia of Trade, Labor, and Politics
International Encyclopedia of Environmental Politics
International Encyclopedia of Political Science
Encyclopedia of African History
Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy
Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women
Tobacco in History and Culture: An Encyclopedia
International Encyclopedia of the Sociology of Education
Encyclopedia of the Arctic
Encyclopedia of Government and Politics
Social Science Encyclopedia

The combination of perspectives and cross-disciplinary purview available through these printed sources cannot be matched by a single website. (A few hundred of these encyclopedias are available in online versions, but they are subscription databases available exclusively through library affiliations.)

The whole purpose of any encyclopedia article is to provide a concise overview of generally “established” knowledge on its topic, written

for a nonspecialist audience, with a brief bibliography of highly recommended sources for further study (rather than an indiscriminate printout of “everything”). And there are literally thousands of such encyclopedias. (Don’t be misled by the word “Dictionary” in the title of many of these sets; in library terminology it refers simply to the alphabetical arrangement of articles, not to their length, and so it is frequently used synonymously with “Encyclopedia.”)

SAMPLE LISTS OF ENCYCLOPEDIAS

The following sets are often considered standard sources within their fields:

- International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 26 vols. (Elsevier, 2001)
- Encyclopedia of World Art*, 17 vols. (McGraw-Hill, 1959–1987)
- Dictionary of Art*, 34 vols. (Grove, 1996; Oxford University Press, 1997) and online by subscription
- New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 29 vols. (Grove, 2001) and online by subscription (Oxford University Press)
- American National Biography*, 24 vols. and supplements (Oxford University Press, 1999–2005) and online via subscription
- Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (British), 60 vols. (Oxford University Press, 2004) and online via subscription
- Dictionary of American History*, 10 vols. (Scribners, 2003)
- New Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, 8 vols. (Scribners, 2008)
- New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, 6 vols. (Scribners, 2005)
- Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, 13 vols. and Supplement (Scribners, 1982–2004)
- Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 10 vols. (Thomson Gale, 2006)
- Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 10 vols. (Routledge, 1998)
- New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 15 vols. (Catholic University of America Press, 2003)
- New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics*, 8 vols. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)
- Encyclopedia of Psychology*, 8 vols. (Oxford University Press, 2000)
- Encyclopedia of Religion*, 15 vols. (Macmillan, 2005)
- McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Science and Technology*, 20 vols. (McGraw-Hill, revised irregularly)
- Grzimek’s Animal Life Encyclopedia*, 17 vols. (Gale, 2003–2004)
- International Wildlife Encyclopedia*, 22 vols. (Marshall Cavendish, 2002)
- Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, 11 vols. (Blackwell, 2007)

Although the above sets are certainly important, they by no means exhaust the field. The following is a list of selected representative titles; it only scratches the surface of the range of sources available in research libraries:

- Black America: A State-By-State Historical Encyclopedia*, 2 vols. (ABC-CLIO, 2011)
- Dictionary of Literary Biography*, 350+ vols., ongoing (Gale Research, 1978–)
- Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 22 vols. (Macmillan, 2007)
- Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd edition (in progress; Brill, 2007–)
- Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, 4 vols. (Oxford University Press, 1998)
- Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History*, 6 vols. (Macmillan, 2006)
- Encyclopedia of Aging*, 2 vols. (Springer, 2006)
- Encyclopedia of Agricultural Science*, 4 vols. (Academic Press, 1994)
- Encyclopedia of American Cultural & Intellectual History*, 3 vols. (Scribners, 2001)
- Encyclopedia of American Education*, 3 vols. (Facts on File, 2007)
- Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, 3 vols. (Scribners, 2002)
- Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, 5 vols. (Sage, 2006)
- Encyclopedia of Antislavery and Abolition*, 2 vols. (Greenwood, 2007)
- Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics*, 4 vols. (Academic Press, 1998)
- Encyclopedia of Applied Plant Sciences*, 3 vols. (Elsevier Academic, 2003)
- Encyclopedia of Asian History*, 4 vols. (Collier Macmillan, 1988)
- Encyclopedia of Bilingual Education*, 2 vols. (Sage, 2008)
- Encyclopedia of Biodiversity*, 5 vols. (Academic Press, 2001)
- Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, 5 vols. (Macmillan Reference, 2004)
- Encyclopedia of Cancer*, 4 vols. (Springer, 2009)
- Encyclopedia of Criminology*, 3 vols. (Routledge, 2005)
- Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, 5 vols. (Sage, 2006)
- Encyclopedia of Drugs, Alcohol, and Addictive Behavior*, 4 vols. (Macmillan Reference USA, 2009)
- Encyclopedia of Educational Leadership and Administration*, 2 vols. (Sage, 2006)
- Encyclopedia of Environment and Society*, 5 vols. (Sage, 2007)
- Environment Encyclopedia*, 11 vols. (Marshall Cavendish, 2001)
- Encyclopedia of Ethics*, 3 vols. (Routledge, 2001)
- Encyclopedia of European Social History: From 1350 to 2000*, 6 vols. (Scribners, 2001)

- Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*, 3 vols. (Scribners, 2003)
- Encyclopedia of Food Science and Technology*, 4 vols. (Wiley, 2000)
- Encyclopedia of Forensic and Legal Medicine*, 4 vols. (Elsevier Academic Press, 2005)
- Encyclopedia of Forensic Sciences*, 3 vols. (Academic Press, 2002)
- Encyclopedia of Forest Sciences*, 4 vols. (Elsevier, 2004)
- Encyclopedia of Historic and Endangered Livestock and Poultry Breeds* (Yale University Press, 2001)
- Encyclopedia of Historical Treaties and Alliances*, 2 vols. (Facts on File, 2005)
- Encyclopedia of Holocaust Literature* (Oryx, 2002)
- Encyclopedia of Human Nutrition*, 4 vols. (Elsevier/Academic, 2005)
- Encyclopedia of Immigration and Migration in the American West*, 2 vols. (Sage, 2006)
- Encyclopedia of Journalism*, 6 vols. (Sage, 2009)
- Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture*, 6 vols. (Gale, 2008)
- Encyclopedia of Law Enforcement*, 3 vols. (Sage, 2005)
- Encyclopedia of Leadership*, 4 vols. (Sage, 2004)
- Encyclopedia of Mathematical Physics*, 5 vols. (Elsevier, 2006)
- Encyclopedia of Ocean Sciences*, 6 vols. (Academic Press, 2001)
- Encyclopedia of Physical Science and Technology*, 18 vols. (Academic Press, 2002)
- Encyclopedia of Prisons and Correctional Facilities*, 2 vols. (Sage, 2005)
- Encyclopedia of Psychological Assessment*, 2 vols. (Sage, 2003)
- Encyclopedia of Race and Crime*, 2 vols. (Sage, 2009)
- Encyclopedia of the Renaissance*, 6 vols. (Scribners, 1999)
- Encyclopedia of Rose Science*, 3 vols. (Academic Press, 2003)
- Encyclopedia of Special Education*, 3 vols. (Wiley, 2007)
- Encyclopedia of Terrorism* (Facts on File, 2007)
- Encyclopedia of the American Constitution*, 6 vols. (Macmillan, 2000)
- Encyclopedia of the Human Brain*, 4 vols. (Academic Press, 2002)
- Encyclopedia of the United Nations and International Agreements*, 4 vols. (Routledge, 2003)
- Encyclopedia of Themes and Subjects in Painting* (Abrams, 1971)
- Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict*, 3 vols. (Elsevier, 2008)
- Encyclopedia of White-Collar and Corporate Crime*, 2 vols. (Sage, 2005)
- Encyclopedia of World Geography*, 24 vols. (Marshall Cavendish, 2002)
- Feminist Encyclopedia of Spanish Literature*, 2 vols. (Greenwood, 2002)
- Food Cultures of the World*, 4 vols. (Greenwood, 2011)

- Gale Encyclopedia of Alternative Medicine*, 4 vols. (Gale Cengage Learning, 2009)
- Gale Encyclopedia of Medicine*, 5 vols. (Thomson Gale 2006)
- Greenwood Encyclopedia of Global Medieval Life and Culture*, 3 vols. (Greenwood, 2009)
- International Encyclopedia of Dance*, 6 vols. (Oxford University Press, 1998)
- International Encyclopedia of Political Science*, 8 vols. (Sage, 2011)
- International Military and Defense Encyclopedia*, 6 vols. (Brassey's [US], 1993)
- Legal Systems of the World: A Political, Social, and Cultural Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (ABC-CLIO, 2002)
- Literature of Travel and Exploration: An Encyclopedia*, 3 vols. (Fitzroy Dearborn, 2003)
- Macmillan Encyclopedia of World Slavery*, 2 vols. (Macmillan USA, 1998)
- Mrs. Byrne's Dictionary of Unusual, Obscure, and Preposterous Words*¹ (Carol Publishing Group, 1994)
- New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics and the Law*, 3 vols. (Stockton Press, 1998)
- Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, 3 vols. (Oxford University Press, 2001)
- Oxford Encyclopedia of Economic History*, 5 vols. (Oxford, 2003)
- Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, 4 vols. (Oxford University Press, 1996)
- Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning* (Routledge, 2001)
- Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women*, 4 vols. (Routledge, 2000)
- World Education Encyclopedia: A Survey of Educational Systems Worldwide*, 3 vols. (Gale, 2002)
- World Encyclopedia of Peace*, 8 vols. (Oceana, 1999)
- Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*, 5 vols. (Gale, 2009)
- Worldmark Encyclopedia of Religious Practices*, 3 vols. (Thomson Gale, 2006)

None of these sources is freely available on the open Internet (sites that are available to anyone, anywhere, without requiring a password or a credit card). Many of the subjects suggested here are covered by several other specialized works, too; and thousands of additional encyclopedias

exist for still other topics. (Since the year 2000 the Library of Congress has cataloged more than 8,700 such works.)

IDENTIFYING STANDARD WORKS, PROVIDING PRIMARY SOURCES, AND PROVIDING OVERVIEW LISTS OF ARTICLES

I mentioned above that one particularly useful feature of specialized encyclopedia articles is that they usually provide a brief bibliography of highly recommended sources for further study. This produces a fourth advantage: you can frequently use these selective bibliographies to identify immediately the “standard” or best books on a particular topic, which would otherwise tend to be buried in larger retrievals. For example, a student interested in “the system of tribute payments among the Greek city-states during the Peloponnesian War” identified, through *Reference Universe*, an article on “Tribute lists (Athenian)” in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. The source note at the end of this article says, quite explicitly, “The standard work on the tribute records is B. D. Merritt, H., T. Wade-Gery, and M. F. McGregor, *The Athenian Tribute Lists*, 4 vols. (1939–53).”

In another instance, a student writing a paper on “moonshining” found two encyclopedias in very different disciplines that had articles on the subject: the 10-volume *Dictionary of American History* (2002) and the 4-volume *Encyclopedia of Drugs, Alcohol & Addictive Behavior* (2008). The articles from both sets overlapped in recommending one particular work in their short bibliographies, Joseph Dabney’s *Mountain Spirits* (1985), so that became a basic point of departure for her next step.

In the same way, another scholar trying to get oriented to the literature on the topic “Human Rights in Islam” was greatly aided by a comparison of the multiple articles supplied by the following:

- The 5-volume 2009 *Encyclopedia of Human Rights* (with a 13-page article on “Islam”)
- The 6-volume *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World* (2009; 9-page article on “Human Rights”)
- The 2-volume *Encyclopedia of Islam in the United States* (4-page article on “Human Rights”)
- The 2-volume 2004 *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World* (2-page article on “Human Rights”)
- The 3-volume 2001 *Human Rights Encyclopedia* (2-page article on “Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam”)

More specifically:

- The bibliographies of *all five* of these articles overlap in recommending *one* particular book, A. E. Myer's *Islam and Human Rights* (2006)
- The bibliographies of three of them overlap in recommending a second book (An-Na'im, *Toward an Islamic Reformation*)
- The bibliographies of three of them overlap in recommending a third book (Baderin, *International Human Rights and Islamic Law*)

Five additional sources were recommended by at least two of the several bibliographies.

This overlap of recommendations is important because the literature on such a subject can be overwhelming in its sheer volume. In the online catalog of the Library of Congress alone, for example, a search combining **Islam? AND Human rights** as subject terms produces more than 500 hits.

It is therefore extremely helpful to researchers to get multiple “takes” on the same subject for two distinct but related reasons:

1. To identify the most important *concepts* relevant to the topic—i.e., “the basic facts”—or the “what’s important” ideas the absence of which might be fatal to a paper that overlooks them
2. To filter the huge mass of available material by identifying the *core literature* on the subject, segregated from indiscriminate print-outs or computer retrievals of hundreds or thousands of hits

The comparative perspectives provided by multiple specialized encyclopedias thus provide an assurance of quality that does not attach to Wikipedia articles. Again, this is not to criticize the latter for what they do; it is rather to point out that other important research options for gaining overview perspectives exist “outside the box” of that one website.

A fifth advantage in using specialized encyclopedias comes from an interesting feature of very many recent sets: they often include in their last volume (after the A–Z sequence of articles) a compilation of primary source documents relevant to the subject covered by the set. For example, the 5-volume *Encyclopedia of the American Civil War* (ABC-CLIO, 2000) has 274 pages of primary sources reproduced in its final volume, including letters, proclamations, laws, ordinances, orders, and official reports. The last volume of the *Encyclopedia of Arms Control and Disarmament* (Scribners, 1993) reprints the texts of more than 140 treaties of historical interest, from the twelfth century B.C. to 1992. The final volume of the *Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes against Humanity* (Thomson Gale, 2005) reprints 193 pages of primary source documents including

letters, laws, orders, identity cards, reports, conventions, Security Council resolutions, and judicial decisions. Students who are told to “use primary sources” in their assignments are well advised to look for these specialized subject encyclopedias. Once again, you will not find such compilations—carefully selected by experts—attached to Wikipedia articles.

A sixth advantage to these specialized sets is that, in their prefatory matter, they routinely provide an easily skimmable alphabetical list of all of their articles. Such a menu can greatly expand one’s awareness of the many unanticipated aspects of the subject. The 9-page “List of Entries” in volume 1 of the 4-volume *Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace* lists, for example, articles on “Architects for Peace,” “Draft Resistance in the Soviet Union,” “Gay Rights Movements,” “Humor,” “Japanese Peace Museums,” “*Lysistrata*,” “Photography,” “Race and Conflict,” “Spinoza’s Ideas on War and Peace,” “Sustainable Development,” “Truth and Reconciliation Commissions,” “Tibet, Resistance to China in,” “War Toys and Noncompetitive Games,” and hundreds of other topics that probably would not occur to students curious about this field. Skimming through such lists can open up whole new areas of awareness and focus that cannot be perceived via websites. The same lists can often suggest many unanticipated but relevant search terms that can be used in further database searching.

Specialized subject encyclopedias thus offer six major advantages over Wikipedia:

- Their articles are stable.
- They are reliably vetted (and often signed).
- They provide, when used in combination, multiple different disciplinary perspectives on the same topic.
- Their concise bibliographies are easy to compare for overlapping recommendations of unusually important sources.
- They frequently offer large compilations of primary source documents.
- They provide very helpful overview “lists of entries” that spell out unanticipated aspects of their topic and also bring to your attention good search terms for use in other sources.

HOW TO FIND ARTICLES IN SPECIALIZED ENCYCLOPEDIAS

How, then, do you find out which encyclopedias have articles specifically on your subject? The easiest (though not the only) way is through searching *Reference Universe*. While this database does not cover *all*

encyclopedias—not even all of those listed above—it does provide much more extensive coverage than any other single source.

What I have found in practice is that if *Reference Universe* leads me to a particular encyclopedia on the library's shelves, then frequently there will be similar encyclopedias covering the same subject shelved right nearby, some of which are not indexed by the database. For example, I have twice helped readers who wanted information on “Montague grammar,” which is a kind of formal system of analysis in linguistics. *Reference Universe* points to a 2-page article on the topic in the *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics* (4 vols., Oxford University Press, 2003), but the 14-volume *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics* (2nd ed., Elsevier, 2006), not covered by *Reference Universe*, was shelved right nearby. This set provided a 12-page article on the topic, plus a 3-page article on Richard Montague himself.

Similarly, a reader interested in “federalism in Argentina, Mexico, and Brazil” found, through *Reference Universe*, one article in a reference source with the call number F1401.L3253, but shelved right nearby at F1406.E53 2008 was the 6-volume *Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture* (2nd ed., Gale, 2008) with a 2-page article on “Federalism” in the whole region.

Other good resources for identifying specialized encyclopedias are the following:

CREDO Reference (Credo Reference) is a subscription database that provides full texts of articles from more than 600 reference sources, including many encyclopedias, from more than 70 publishers. It is not as extensive in its indexing range as *Reference Universe*, but everything in this database is full-text.

Sage Knowledge (Sage Publications) is a subscription database that offers full-text access to more than 2,700 e-books. Within this collection is the *Sage Reference* component that provides more than 450 specialized encyclopedias and subject handbooks (e.g., *Encyclopedia of African American Society*, *Encyclopedia of Geographic Information Science*, *Encyclopedia of Psychological Assessment*, *Handbook of Early Childhood Literacy*, *Handbook of Marketing Research*, *SAGE Handbook of Educational Leadership*); more titles are added each year.

Oxford Reference Online (Oxford University Press) provides the full texts of more than 300 dictionaries, encyclopedias, and *Oxford Companion* volumes (among many other sources).

Guide to Reference (American Library Association) is a subscription database often used by reference librarians; it is a comprehensive list of reference sources in all subject areas and languages,

categorized by types of literature, including dictionaries and encyclopedias (see Chapter 15).

ARBAonline (Libraries Unlimited) and its corresponding print volumes *American Reference Books Annual*. This source provides reviews of over 60,000 reference sources, both print and online, since 1970; it has excellent indexes enabling you to identify encyclopedias in all subject areas, and its annotations provide critical evaluations (see Chapter 15).

Dictionary of Dictionaries and Eminent Encyclopedias, by Thomas Kabdebo (Bowker-Saur, 1997, 2nd ed.). This is a critical guide to more than 6,000 dictionaries and encyclopedias; works discussed can be monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual as long as English is one element. It will often tell you the *best* source in an area and compare it to other sources. It has a very good index. Although it is becoming somewhat dated, you can always check to see if a title recommended here has come out in a later edition.

Dictionaries, Encyclopedias, and Other Word-Related Books, by Annie M. Brewer, 2 vols. (Gale Research, 1988, 4th ed.). This is a large survey listing of about 30,000 works, from all time periods, arranged in the order of Library of Congress Classification numbers, with an index of subjects and titles. Entries reproduce nonevaluative library catalog records.

Catalog of Dictionaries, Word Books, and Philological Texts, 1440–1900, compiled by David E. Vancil (Greenwood Press, 1993). A good source for historical research, this is an inventory of the Cordell Collection of Dictionaries at Indiana State University; it is the world's largest, with more than 5,100 pre-1901 imprints plus several thousand more for the twentieth century. Indexes are by date, by language, and by subject. Entries are not annotated.

Anglo-American General Encyclopedias: A Historical Bibliography: 1703–1967, by S. Pedraig (James Patrick) Walsh (R. R. Bowker, 1968). This is another good source for a historical overview; its 419 entries are extensively annotated. The indexes are by editors and publishers/distributors; there is also a chronological listing of titles.

If you wish to check your own library's holdings for specialized encyclopedias, both old and new, you can usually find them under these forms of subject headings:

[Subject heading]—Dictionaries

[Subject heading]—Encyclopedias

[Subject heading]—[Geographic subdivision]—Dictionaries

[Subject heading]—[Geographic subdivision]—Encyclopedias

The important thing to note, here, is that either of the subdivisions, **Dictionaries** or **Encyclopedias**, may turn up a good source. (The several ways to find the right subject heading in the first place—especially the crucial first element in the string—will be discussed in the next chapter.)

EXAMPLES OF SEARCHES

The utility of specialized encyclopedias is often discovered by researchers writing short papers.

- A researcher interested in “the theology of humor” found a 30-page article on “Humor and Religion” in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 15 vols. (Thomson Gale, 2005); another of 10 pages in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., 22 vols. (Macmillan, 2007); and 8 pages in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (Doubleday, 1992). He also discovered 2- or 3-page articles on “Humor” or “Humour” in each of the following: *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 13 vols. (T & T Clark, 1913); *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, 6 vols. (Brill, 2002); *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 5 vols. and supplement (Abingdon Press, 1962, 1976); *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, 17 vols. (Beauchesne, 1969); *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (Macmillan, 1972); and *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, 2 vols. (Thomson Gale, 2004).
- An analyst looking for an overview of “Jimmy Carter’s foreign policy” found a 4-page article in *Encyclopedia of U.S. Foreign Relations*, 4 vols. (Oxford University Press, 1997) and an 8-page article in *U.S. Presidents and Foreign Policy: From 1789 to the Present*, 1 vol. (ABC-CLIO, 2007); also multipage sections in *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, 3 vols. (Scribners/Gale Group, 2002) and *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, 1 vol. (Facts on File, 2004).
- A grad student interested in “the theory of the State” found a whole variety of sources: an 8-page article in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2nd ed., 10 vols. (Thomson Gale/Macmillan); 4 pages in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 10 vols. (Routledge, 1998);

7 pages in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, 5 vols. (Scribners, 1973); 8 pages in *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, 6 vols. (Scribners/Thomson Gale, 2005); 12 pages in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., 15 vols. (Thomson Gale, 2003); and 27 pages in the “Syntopicon” introduction to *Great Books of the Western World*, 2nd ed. (Britannica, 1990).

- A social studies researcher interested in the idea of “community” in Nazi Germany found an article on precisely that topic, outlining the different concepts involved, in *The Encyclopedia of the Third Reich*, 2 vols. (Macmillan, 1991). The article included numerous cross-references within the set to other aspects of the subject (“Volk Community,” “Front Experience,” “Family,” “Education,” “Führer Principle”).
- A researcher interested in “how blind people perceive colors” found that the concept of “Synaesthesia” was directly related; on that topic she found a 3-page article in the *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1998), and an 8-page article in the *Encyclopedia of Creativity*, 2 vols. (Academic Press, 1999).
- A humanities student interested in “Metaphor” could find only very brief articles in the *Britannica*, *Americana*, and *World Book* sets, but the *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1998) provided a 17-page article. Additional lengthy treatments could be found in several of the sources mentioned above—*Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, and *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*—as well as in the *International Encyclopedia of Communications*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1989), the *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton, 1993), and in the various *Linguistics* encyclopedias mentioned previously.

PECULIAR STRENGTHS OF GENERAL SETS

In emphasizing specialized encyclopedias, I do not mean to suggest that the general sets are unimportant. Indeed, some surprising features within these sets are particularly useful. The *Encyclopedia Americana*, for example (unlike other encyclopedias), sometimes prints the full texts of historic documents in addition to providing information about them. When you look up “Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen” or “Mayflower Compact” or “Washington’s Farewell Address,” for instance, you get not just summaries but actual texts. *Americana* also has articles on each individual century (e.g., on the Fifth Century or the Nineteenth

Century) that are useful; it also has articles on each book of the Bible as well as on many individual works of art, literature, and music (the *Winged Victory* statue, the novel *Middlemarch*, the ballet *The Firebird*, etc.). (Current editions of this set are now available only via an online subscription; the last printed version appeared in 2006.)

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (which since 2010 has been available only electronically) covers philosophy particularly well, including a book-length article “Philosophies of the Branches of Knowledge,” which no other encyclopedia offers. The annual *Britannica Book of the Year* supplement (still available in print format) is very good in its presentation of statistical data on political, social, demographic, and economic conditions in the countries of the world; and it provides them in two sections, the first by country and the second by subject, so that comparisons can be readily made among countries. The *Macropaedia* (long article) section of the printed *Britannica* set also does something the other sets don’t—it clusters what would otherwise be many alphabetically separated small articles within larger theme articles, often book length. Thus “Musical Instruments” gathers in one place articles on percussion, stringed, keyboard, wind, and electronic instruments; the article “Transportation” includes sections on history, motor vehicles, railroads, aircraft, ships, pipelines, urban mass transportation, traffic control and safety, and so on. The *Micropaedia* (short length) section of the set offers articles that often serve as overviews of the longer treatments in the *Macropaedia* section. The printed set’s one-volume *Propaedia* is a fascinating classification of all of the articles in the entire *Britannica* in a logical order, showing relationships and linkages not apparent from the alphabetical sequence of the articles themselves. (This outline is entirely omitted from the online version of the encyclopedia. I much prefer the final 2010 printed set myself, especially since its *Macropaedia* articles are so long.)

The *World Book* is exceptionally good in providing quick, “look-it-up”-type information—on flags, state flowers, first aid, gardening instructions, symptoms of illnesses, metric conversion tables, football rules, summaries of Shakespeare’s plays, and so on.

General foreign-language encyclopedias are often particularly good in turning up biographical information on obscure figures who played roles in the histories of various countries. Their illustrations are also sometimes more useful than those in the English-language sets. These sources, however, are overlooked much too often.

Many encyclopedias focus specifically on biographical information. For an overview of research options in this area, see Chapter 14.

When you need an article on a particular subject (a substantive but less than book-length source), keep in mind that you have several options beyond free websites:

- An encyclopedia article (generally written as an overview for nonspecialists)
- A “state-of-the-art” literature review article (generally written as an overview for specialists)
- A journal/periodical or newspaper article in databases (or in other formats) not freely available on the open Web
- An essay in a book anthology

Each of the latter forms is accessible through sources that will be discussed later. For an encyclopedia article, however, you should start by assuming that there are *specialized* encyclopedias covering your area of interest and then actively look for them.