

Road Map to the Fields of Learning

By DAVID M. GLIXON, an editor and translator, can usually be found near a reference book.

LET REFERENCE volumes, with extensive view, survey mankind from China to Peru. Since a road map might help, we trace here the route followed in this year's reconnaissance: general encyclopedias; English-language dictionaries; aids to writing and speaking; bilingual dictionaries; literary studies; biographical dictionaries; guides to history, politics, and geography; to nature; to art; to science; to Bible and religion; et cetera. (You're allowed to skip.)

This spring brings to fruition a completely new major reference work, the *Encyclopedia International* (twenty volumes, \$199.50). A dozen volumes are now ready, and the balance will be out by mid-May, according to Grolier, Inc., which also publishes the *Encyclopedia Americana* and *The Book of Knowledge*. The *International* staff is headed by Lowell A. Martin, Ph.D., former dean of Rutgers Graduate School of Library Service, as editorial director, and by George A. Cornish, former executive editor of the New York *Herald Tribune*, as editor-in-chief. The *International* is a family encyclopedia, replete with practical articles for homemakers and businessmen, and with diagrams, study guides, career outlines, and other features aimed at students from junior high school through college. In number of words (19½ million) it is not in a class with the *Britannica* (36 million), the *Americana* (28½ million), or *Collier's* (21 million), and its readership will probably be at a somewhat lower intellectual level. This is reflected in the relative brevity of most of the articles in the *International*, though subject coverage is extensive. Among

the work's strong points are its conciseness and its physical attractiveness; specific advantages include pronunciations, numerous clear photos and tables, and an abundance of two-color maps placed precisely where they are needed. (It may or may not be significant that the *International* has a seven-line entry for the theater's George Jessel but none for the law's Sir George Jessel; the *Britannica* omits the former but devotes half a page to the latter; and *Collier's* sensibly ignores both.)

The 1964 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (twenty-four volumes, \$398) gives ample proof that annual revision continues. Recent criticisms of the 1963 and earlier editions have apparently had beneficial effects, visible not only in major articles but even in buried sentences. But this is the sort of country where, as the Red Queen remarked, "it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast." Since 1961, *Britannica* editors have changed more than three-quarters of the work's 36-million-word total, which means that, in spite of many outmoded holdover articles, the 1964 edition approaches more closely than it has in decades—the goal of being up to date in scholarship and interpretation as well as in facts. Among the new or greatly expanded articles are those on History, the Scottsboro Case, FDR, Goldwater, Genetics, Fauvism, Faulkner, and Jazz. Illustrations continue to improve without detracting from the set's dignity. The Atlas volume has 108 pages of beautifully shaded maps, including many insets of metropolitan areas, but one misses the individual state and country maps of earlier editions. Granted, the EB is not perfect; in number of words and sheer quality of content it remains the giant among adult encyclopedias.

The giant of the single-volume reference works, *The Columbia Encyclopedia* (Columbia University Press, \$49.50), has just published its third edition, greatly enlarged (to 2,400 small-type, three-column pages) and thoroughly revised since the second edition of 1935. Its 7½ million words make it comparable in magnitude to some important multivolume encyclopedias; the great difference here is the number of the *Columbia's* articles (75,000, twice as many as the EB) and the brevity of most. Through helpful cross-references the scope of many a concise article is extended far beyond its actual length. Thus Psychiatry, which occupies a third of a column, has twelve cross-references, one of them leading to the one-and-one-half-column article on Psychoanalysis; this in turn leads to thirteen others, including a three-quarter-column essay on Freud with further references, *und so weiter* if not *ad infinitum*. (Occasionally the system fails, as in the fine piece on Existentialism, where there are no cross-references to the names of its exponents.) The editors, William Bridgewater and Seymour Kurtz, boast of the inclusion of every Biblical name and all U.S. towns of 1,000 or more inhabitants; the threshold might profitably have been raised. On the other hand, the former preponderance of American biographical sketches has been corrected to a better balance of world figures. Among the helpful features are pronunciations and bibliographies. Illustrations are few but large and purposeful; twenty black-and-white maps cover the main areas of the U.S. and the rest of the globe. Here are the essential facts about everything and everybody of more than passing interest—a large-scale "first aid" to the intelligent teen-age and adult reader.

Since *The World Book Encyclopedia Dictionary* (Field Enterprises, two vol-



umes, \$50.20) was planned as a supplement to the encyclopedia, it omits biographical and gazetteer entries. So does *Webster's Third New International*, which sells for a few dollars less, but W3 has 450,000 entries as against *World Book's* 180,000. Thus it is rather more comprehensive than a desk dictionary, but hardly in the class of an unabridged. On the other hand, the *World Book Encyclopedia Dictionary*—one of the Thorndike-Barnhart Series, edited by a staff under Clarence L. Barnhart—has the advantage of comprehensibility: words encountered at an early age are defined in easier language, common meanings are given first, and illustrative phrases are long enough to be fully explanatory. Even definitions of such complex terms as *fission*, *parallax*, and *data reduction* are written in a relaxed prose quite unlike W3's stuffed sentences. English and foreign phrases, mythological and Biblical names, etymologies, synonymies, and abbreviations are all included in the general vocabulary. Pronunciations are clear, and the typographic arrangement is laudable.

A new entry in the desk-dictionary class is the *Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary* (\$6.50; thumb-indexed, \$7.50), which claims to have 150,000 entries. The figure is approximately the same as that of its most recent (and slightly cheaper) competitor, *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate*, when you add to the latter's general vocabulary its biographical, gazetteer, and abbreviations sections; in F&W these are merged in a single alphabetical listing. The F&W is somewhat bulkier—a small price to pay for its larger and far more legible type face. As to definitions: for the three words cited above, F&W is clearer and more explicit on *fission* and *parallax*, and excellent on *data reduction*; not only does 7Coll ignore that phrase, but it won't even yield *data* unless you look up *datum*! They are about equal on *romanticism* and *classicism*, though you need a lot of wind to read 7Coll's definition of the former. 7Coll omits *cassation*; F&W gives only its legal sense (*World Book* has both the legal and the musical meanings—and quotes SR on the second). F&W defines *situation comedy*; 7Coll doesn't.

Moreover, it doesn't require a course in phonology to understand F&W's pronunciations, though they don't always reflect the preferences set forth in the fascinating article on Regional Variations (cf. *caught* and *hurry*). F&W has good coverage of foreign phrases, pointers on usage, clear maps at the more important geographical entries, and two welcome innovations: collateral adjectives at the end of many

entries (e.g., *aural* for *ear*) and a three-page table of English words with their Latin and Greek combining forms (anyone for crossword puzzles?). Recommended.

After a good dictionary, the first requisite of a desk bookshelf is a style guide. An old reliable, recently reissued, is Sir Ernest Gowers's *The Complete Plain Words* (Penguin, paperback, \$1.25). Advice on thinking before writing, on choice of words (with preference for the familiar and the precise and a scorn for the superfluous), pleasant chapters on grammar and punctuation, the rehabilitation of official writing—on all these topics Gowers's sensible treatment makes his handy book as enjoyable to read as it is worthwhile to consult.

THE next place on the shelf belongs to *Usage and Abusage*, by Eric Partridge (Penguin, paperback, \$1.25), an alphabetically arranged list of (a) words and phrases, showing how and why they should be used or avoided, and (b) general terms, including those of grammar and rhetoric, with enlightening discussions. You might well start by reading the twelve columns of examples of *wooliness* (one of them an abuse by the candid author himself). My own favorite pages are those listing Group Terms, both legitimate (like "a hover of trout" or "a business of ferrets") and fanciful ("a quantum of scientists," "an altitude of highbrows," or "a gush of poets"). Too bad the book is on newsprint.

Dissatisfied with what your dictionary tells you about the way you have been pronouncing a word? You will probably find justification in the *NBC Handbook of Pronunciation* (third edition, Crowell, \$4.95). According to the jacket blurb, the book gives "the correct way to say 20,000 words and proper names frequently mispronounced." The claim is denied by the editors, whose stated purpose is not to "prescribe how words *should* be pronounced" but to record "how they *are* pronounced by educated speakers." The standard is supposed to be "General American," but the usual alternatives are not allowed. Though the NBC man concedes that "some excellent speakers say *nooz*, others *nyooz*, and still others use an intermediate vowel sound," only *nooz* is listed. All pronunciations are represented by both respelling and phonetic symbols; the first is admittedly unreliable and the second requires training. An appendix lists such recent names-in-the-news as Celebrezze (se-luh-BREE-zee!) and Verwoerd (fair-FOOT!) Maybe we should stay tuned to CBS.

When alternative pronunciations "are

so frequently and widely encountered that it is impossible and unrealistic to ignore them," it is "consequently dishonest to consider them, arbitrarily, as unacceptable." Thus speaketh Norman Lewis in his *Dictionary of Modern Pronunciation* (Harper & Row, \$4.95), which lists just the 9,000 words "most likely to cause problems." For a large proportion of them he records more than one pronunciation current among educated speakers (e.g., FROG or FRAWG), and for every listing the reader is referred to an analysis of one of 306 major categories of pronunciation patterns (six -og words are listed for which regional variation determines the vowel sound). The respellings make the guide easy to follow.

Another dictionary function is taken over by Ralph de Sola's *Abbreviations Dictionary* (Duell, Sloan & Pearce, \$4.95), which, even if it doesn't have quite the 17,000 entries claimed on the jacket, probably includes most of the contractions one is likely to encounter in this age of abbreviations. The compiler had a few blind spots, for there are curious omissions: pencil-lead markings (HB, etc.), medical and hospital terms (t.i.d., q.s., and d.o.a.), old euphemisms (d-d and d-n, to say the least), and even LSD. After the alphabetical listing come the numbered abbreviations (*I Henry IV*, etc., but padded with ordinal numerals), military and naval time, and Roman numerals.

In the foreign-language department we can recommend *Crowell's Spanish-English and English-Spanish Dictionary* (\$4.95; thumb-indexed, \$5.95), whose 80,000 entries relate to the language as spoken in Latin America and include variant meanings for particular areas. Thus *chuzo*, in general a goad or pike, also means a whip to some West Indians, a worn-out horse or a pick axe to Chileans, any pointed object to Ecuadorians, a bird's head or a scorpion's sting to many Central Americans, and a shoe to Peruvians; *caen chuzos* means "it's raining cats and dogs." Boldface key-words, deep indentions, and raised numerals to identify conjugations are among the typographic felicities of this handsomely bound, 1,270-page volume.

Another of *World Almanac* size is *The Schöffler-Weis Comprehensive German and English Dictionary* (McKay, \$9.95), conveying, in an adequate type and on thin paper, a surprisingly large amount of information: 134,000 entries in 1,832 pages, rich in current everyday and technical terms and in translations of and from Americanisms. The book's greatest wealth, two-thirds of the whole, is in the German-English section.

The Brobdingnag in this field is *Langenscheidt's New Muret-Sanders Encyclopedic Dictionary* (Barnes &

Noble), a four-volume work of "unabridged" comprehensiveness. The second unit (*English-German, N-Z*, \$17.50) has just appeared; in all, there are 180,000 main entries in English, occupying 1,800 three-column, 8" x 11½" readable pages. The 150-page appendix to this unimpeachable work includes, *inter alia*, a lengthy glossary of abbreviations, biographical and gazetteer sections, and an unusual table of mathematical equivalents.

The Lilliputians are the revised series of bilingual *Midget Dictionaries* (Macmillan, \$1), pleasantly bound and measuring 2" x 3" x ⅝", each providing equivalents for 25,000 words. The customary implausible but useful dialogues round out the vocabularies.

Even fewer words are treated by Patrick Waddington in *A Basic Russian Vocabulary* (Crowell, \$4.95), but this is a carefully selected group for beginning students. In tabular form, each of 3,300 commonly encountered Russian words is listed with its stress, its style of inflection, its use with predicates and in phrases and idioms, and its English meaning. Alternative senses, in turn, are discriminated in such a way as to eliminate confusion. At the end, the author prints a checklist of the 1,300 words he believes essential "as active vocabulary for students who have completed elementary studies." An English index to the main vocabulary completes this useful and attractive manual.

Here's a new idea in the bilingual realm: *A Book of French Quotations* (Doubleday, \$5.95), compiled by Norbert Guterman, who has supplied most of the accompanying translations as well as the brief biographical notes and, where needed, explanations of the circumstances surrounding the quotation. Since these are the texts with which "every French writer expects a literate reader to be familiar," the book's value should be obvious. The 2,000 verse and prose quotations, which may take one line apiece or a dozen, range chronologically from the eleventh century to Camus, and there are first-line indexes to the originals, the translations, and the authors. Villon and Rabelais are here, Molière and Racine, Voltaire and Amiel, Stendhal and Proust, and Haraucourt's *Partir, c'est mourir un peu*; and so there is *sagesse* or *divertissement* on every page.

For entertaining studies of some of the modern French poets—and scores of other writers of this century—there's *The Concise Encyclopedia of Modern World Literature* (Hawthorn, \$15), edited by Geoffrey Grigson. His contributors, mostly British compatriots, were asked to write about authors they enjoyed, to quote where possible, to

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On the Fringe



IN MY mind—and this should give you a clue to that faulty mechanism—the fact that I was eating Melba toast when the idea behind this column was born is comparable to the day that apple slugged Sir Isaac Newton. Perhaps I'd better explain. I love obscure facts, those bits of useless information that delight the collector of same and bore everyone else. Therefore, when I eat Melba toast I always think of Dame Nellie Melba, the operatic soprano for whom the stuff was named. I was toying with how many people ate Melba toast without ever wondering about its name when I realized that the reference book field is studded with names, famous yet obscure. For example, take Bartlett, Bulfinch, Hoyle, Roget, and Webster. Practically everyone knows what they wrote but not who they were. If this is the case with you, and I readily admit it was with me (as any member of the staff of the Collier's Reference Service—a research bonus available to owners of *Collier's Encyclopedia*—who helped me dig out the facts can testify) the following can supply you with enough conversational trivia to remove your name permanently from all dinner party guest lists.

JOHN BARTLETT (*Familiar Quotations*) was born in Plymouth, Mass., in 1820, and at the age of three was able to read from the Bible, a feat that must have delighted his mother but thoroughly unnerves me. His formal education was limited to public school in Plymouth but his self-education went on for the rest of his life. At the age of sixteen he was employed by the owner of the University Bookstore in Cambridge, and at twenty-nine he owned the store. He was so well read and his mind was so retentive that "Ask John Bartlett" became a Harvard catchphrase for anyone seeking an apt quote or a rare book. As a result of so many people "asking," Bartlett started a notebook of familiar quotations and published the first edition of his now-classic work in 1855, a mere 295-page book. By 1858 he was up to his third edition, a volume of 446 pages. The Civil War took him out of the store and into the Navy, after which he joined Little, Brown & Co., of which he eventually became a partner. John Bartlett

edited his book through its first nine editions. He died on December 3, 1905. His little notebook is currently in its thirteenth edition and contains 1,068 pages of quotations. Horatio Alger, move over!

THOMAS BULFINCH (*The Age of Fable*) was probably a worry to his parents, which was one more than they needed, what with eleven children. Although Thomas (1796-1867)—whose father was the architect who helped complete the National Capitol—had a fine education at the Boston Latin School, Phillips Exeter Academy, and Harvard University, he just didn't seem to have any get-up-and-go. After doing a little teaching and then working in his brother's store, he settled down to thirty years of clerkship in the Merchants' Bank of Boston. The best that can be said for his position was that it left him enough time to produce eight books, two of which are still consulted today. One is *The Age of Chivalry* and the other is, of course, *Bulfinch's Mythology*, the popular name of *The Age of Fable*. As to whatever became of the other ten Bulfinch children—who knows?

JOHN CASSELL (French, German, Italian, Latin, and Spanish dictionaries) entered publishing from out of left field. Despite his romantic-sounding birthplace—Ring o' Bells Inn, Old Churchyard, Hunt's Bank, Manchester—his was not the most carefree of boyhoods, unless you list child labor in a cotton mill and a velvetene factory on a par with hide-and-seek. The son of an innkeeper, Cassell (1817-1865) became a carpenter's apprentice at the age of sixteen and a temperance reformer two years later, the latter presumably as a result of life at daddy's tavern. At nineteen the young carpenter, known in teetotaling circles as "the boy lecturer," took a three-week walk to London, where he became an official agent of the National Temperance Society at a salary that would have forced a drinking man to dry out. He lectured around the countryside for some four years, educating himself along the way and taking on carpentry jobs when his salary ran out. In 1841 he married a lady of some culture and money, and became a wholesale grocer.