

Reviews

Union of International Associations (eds) *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential*

K.G. Saur, Munich, (1996) CD-ROM, ISBN 3-598-40294-5; Price: 10,500 BEF (USD\$350) for individuals, 18,000 BEF (USD\$600) for institutions

The term 'awesome' is prone to overuse. Nevertheless, its use is entirely appropriate to describe this massive, rich, yet easily accessible work. On a single CD-ROM are contained over 3 000 pages of world problems.

Ranging from *AIDS Orphans* to *Zygomycetes* (a fungal plant disease), the Encyclopedia addresses every conceivable misfortune, some 12 000 in number. The Windows interface and architecture of 120 000 hyperlinks make any visit to the Encyclopedia an adventure as well as a pleasure. It is user-friendly, immediately accessible to anyone with elementary Windows experience.

The scope of the encyclopedia necessarily means that some of the content will not be of immediate interest to criminologists: *Ground Failures Due to Liquefaction*, and *Human Flatulence in Public* (sic) are perhaps illustrative. But there are hundreds of problems within problems which provide rich material for inquisitive readers of this Journal. There are 851 records containing the term *Crime*, and 714 containing the term *Violence*; 431 containing the term *Corruption*; 436 hits for *Police*. *Police* and *Corruption* appear together 45 times. A criminologist seeking a handy introductory overview of an issue could choose no better location for a first port of call.

Consider, for example, the problem of *Fraud*. Following a lucid overview of the generic phenomenon of fraud, the Encyclopedia lists 42 sub-types, and provides links to each. In addition, it specifies aggravating factors and related problems, and provides links to them. It also gives bibliographic references and provides links to them. The full bibliographic references include full publication details for monographs, including ISBN numbers.

There are good reasons why the Encyclopedia provides links to related problems and aggravating factors. Policy issues are often interlinked. We have seen how interventions in one policy area (the de-institutionalization of psychiatric patients) has impacted upon other areas (housing; welfare; crime; the use of force by police). The linkages specified in this Encyclopedia can help decision makers anticipate second and third-order consequences of policy interventions, and assist in planning to avoid unwanted side effects.

Lest one be too greatly weighed down by the world's problems, the Encyclopedia also contains two volumes on human potential and intervention strategies, including 1,360 interlinked entries relating to Buddhism alone.

The Union of International Associations, founded in 1910, is an information clearing house for non-profit trans-national organizations. It has produced a magnificent research tool for students and scholars, policy makers, and journalists. The Encyclopedia deserves a place in every reference library.

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