Reference Reviews Europe/IFB Abstracts.

Access: http://www.library.upenn.edu/ifba/.
Reference Reviews Europe/IFB Abstracts is a quarterly compilation of reviews of reference works and bibliographies selected from the German review journal *Informationsmittel für Bibliotheken (Information Sources for Libraries).* The reviews are English-language summaries of the German originals and are addressed primarily to academic librarians who wish to acquire European reference sources for their collections. The reviewers are a team of North American and British librarians. Sources include works in bibliography, the humanities, the social sciences, history and area studies, and a few in the sciences. Although most of the original works are in German, some are in other European languages. The online files begin with a 1994 "backfile" and have appeared quarterly since then. There are nearly 90 reviews in the latest compilation. Each review, according to the editors, attempts to convey the scope of the work, a summary of its strengths and weaknesses, a bottom-line evaluation, and, when relevant, an assessment of related titles. The reviews in each issue are arranged by broad subject area.

The World Wide Web presentation of this very substantial work is both attractive and utilitarian. The site is enhanced by a carefully written introduction entitled "Learn more about Reference Reviews Europe/IFB Abstracts," a search engine which permits searching of the entire database by keyword, good navigational links, and the use of diacritics. Reference librarians, acquisitions librarians, and serious students of European culture will want to visit this site often.— *W. Thomas Nichol, College of St. Benedict & St. John's University; tnichol@csbsju.edu*

My Virtual Reference Desk. *Access:* http://www.refdesk.com.

Winner of more than three dozen World Wide Web-based awards, this one man show and labor of love from social worker and son of a librarian Robert Drudge provides a tremendous service to the academic community. Librarians can safely send nearly any patron to these pages, from freshman Net neophytes to scholars and subject specialists. Drudge's mission statement for My Virtual Reference Desk (MVRD) defines three goals for the site: quick access, intuitive and easy navigation, and comprehensive and logically indexed content. MVRD succeeds at each turn.

The text-based default opening page loads quickly, while offering the choice of a somewhat more graphics-rich homepage. The remaining pages are simply designed and bare of cumbersome graphics, well organized and executed, and easy to navigate. A thorough table of contents page maps the site nicely and links to a treasure trove of Net resources on the primary pages. For quick information, the "First Things First" page includes links to wire and news services and to current stock quotes, and includes a "Features" section devoted to everything from NASA's astronomy photograph of the day to the *USA Today* crossword puzzle. "Virtual Facts on File" functions as an almanac of the Web, with links to everything from mapping sites to dictionaries of scientific quotations, and includes dozens of links targeted for librarians—from indexes of library Web pages and online catalogs to lists of library vendors.

"My Daily Almanac" also provides valuable links and more quick answers to reference questions, and leads patrons to a number of excellent sites devoted to "this day in history" topics. The "My Virtual Newspaper" page opens with a variety of links to weather sites around the world, follows with links to AP, UPI, and Reuters wire services, then points up newspaper sites by regions worldwide. In the "Latin & South American Newspapers" section, for instance, there are links to 14 Mexican newspapers alone.

From the "My Virtual Encyclopedia" page one may discover, via three dozen topical headings, a wealth of content-based Internet sites. "Books and Literature," for example, links to

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nearly 200 sites ranging from the full text of Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* to Columbia University's *Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*. The history links range from the general, including a succinct essay from Indiana University's Department of Classical Studies entitled "The Ancient City of Athen," to sites for the scholar or specialist, including an excellent directory of Web-based sites for historians.

Comprehensive enough to link undergraduates to a universe of information, yet not nearly as overwhelming as Yahoo or Internet search engine retrieval sets, MVRD could well prove valuable in introductory library instruction classes. Reference librarians, too, should spend the time to familiarize themselves with these rich pages. If you do not have a bookmark for MVRD, make one immediately.—*John Creech, California State University, Monterey Bay*

The National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (NCBE). *Access:* http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/.

The National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education is funded by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA), under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Education. Launched in December 1995, the NCBE Web site resides at George Washington University and is maintained by its Graduate School of Education and Human Development. Partners include the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education and the Linguistic Minority Research Institute of UC-Santa Barbara and UCLA.

NCBE is a major electronic clearinghouse providing access to a treasure trove of research reports, full-text journal articles, software reviews, electronic databases and directories, and a myriad of Web sites and other Internet resources related to the theory and practice of bilingual education. Related areas such as immigration and language policy issues in the United States, educational technology, linguistics, TESOL/ESL, and cultural diversity and eth-

nic studies are also well represented. An efficient search engine is featured prominently on the main menu and elsewhere (a welcome necessity in a research-oriented site of this size), and a well-designed, text-only version is available for users without graphics-capable browsers.

The main menu of NCBE organizes information in nine concise major areas. Of special interest to librarians will be the "Online Library" which provides easy access to full-text journal articles, reports, recent bibliographies, and external resources such as the ERIC Digests and the massive TESOL Library. Elsewhere, a "Technical Assistance Network" functions as an electronic directory, providing annotated links to Web sites and resources such as the U.S. Department of Education, OBEMLA, state education resources and other online education clearinghouses, laboratories, development centers, and networks. NCBE users can also connect to a variety of unique databases such as the Technology in the Curriculum (TIC) Evaluations Database from the California Instructional Technology Clearinghouse, and to NCBE's own bibliographic database. The "Language and Education" section points to highly useful Web sites on the general topics of education, bilingual education and ESL, language and culture, technology, and publishers and distributors of various educational products. Many languages and cultures are covered, but particular emphasis is given to the twelve languages spoken by most Limited English Proficient students in the U.S., these being Spanish, Vietnamese, Hmong, various Chinese languages and dialects, Cambodian, Korean, Lao, various Native American languages, Tagalog, Russian, Haitian, and Arabic.

NCBE will be a valuable site for faculty and students from a variety of disciplines. For example, the ethnic studies student looking for information on preserving Native American languages, the Rhetoric 101 student looking for both sides of the argument on the "English Only" debate, the ESL teacher looking for language software reviews or professional development opportunities, and academic faculty seeking articles on the multicultural classroom will all find information on their topics here. In sum, the NCBE Web site is an authoritative and highly recommended resource for anyone interested in the intersection of languages, cultural diversity, and education.—*Susan A. Vega Garcia, Iowa State University Library; savega@iastate.edu* ∎