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The Concise Dictionary of American Jewish Biography. Jacob Rader Marcus, Editor; Judith M. Daniels, Associate Editor. Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing, 1994. 2 vols. (711 pp.) ISBN 0-926019-74-0. \$200.

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Description and Relation to Other Works

This biographical dictionary, edited by the "dean" of American Jewish historians, contains approximately 24,000 brief entries for notable American Jews who were deceased by the end of 1985. That no living persons are included is not immediately obvious from the title, which assumes familiarity on the part of reference librarians and scholars with the *Dictionary of American Biography* (DAB, 1928-37). The "play on titles" is not pointed out in the introduction.

The DAB was modeled on the British *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB, 1908-09). Both of these works include only entries for deceased people. All of these biographical dictionaries are thus clearly distinct in their scope from the *Who's Who* . . . series, which is limited to living persons.

A typical entry in the work under review gives name; dates and places of birth and death; data on education; identification of profession; and activities in Jewish organizations, including editorship of periodicals. The most important component of each entry, however, is the set of references to other sources that contain fuller biographical data, including various Jewish encyclopedias, periodicals, and biographical directories. In this regard, the CDAJB differs from the *Concise Dictionary of American Biography* (CDAB, 1964), which summarizes the articles in the DAB, but omits bibliographical sources. The title of the work under review could have been "Master Index to American Jewish Biography."

The CDAJB is most definitely a secondary source, not the product of primary research. As the "How to Use" section notes,

It should be emphasized that the names and the information included here come from the printed sources in the bibliography. We did not use our judgment as to which individuals to include or exclude and the information included is only the information available in the sources. When the sources disagree with each other on such things as dates, the conflicting information is included. (p. xi)

In this respect, the CDAJB also differs from *Who's Who in American Jewry* (1980, p. iv), a primary source in that the entries are based on questionnaires completed by the biographees. In his preface to the CDAJB (p. xiv), however, Jacob Rader Marcus notes the inaccuracies in many of the tools that are compiled in this way, owing to "embellishments" of their vitae by the biographees.

Catalogers performing authority control will be interested in the following statement:

Many individuals were included in more than one of our sources and we have combined their biographical information here. However, there were some instances where we could not be certain about single or dual identity. In these cases we have entered both citations with a cross-reference [e.g. *See entry above* or *See entry below*]. (p. xi)

This policy may be compared with current cataloging practice for homographic author names: *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*, 2nd edition (1988, rule 22.20A) allows for situations when headings for two authors cannot be differentiated and permits the titles of their works to be interfiled. This makes sense from a user perspective, as library patrons are not likely to have fuller information on authors than do cata-

logers, and patrons are generally seeking a title in combination with a name. In contrast to library catalogs, biographical dictionaries call for separate entries when clearly distinct lives are being described.

Another aspect of identity: Marcus' Preface includes an interesting discussion of the "Who is a Jew?" issue, as it applies to this biographical directory. This issue concerns Judaica acquisitions librarians, who must define the boundaries of the phrase "works by and about Jews" (Weinberg, 1991, p. 161). The CDAJB includes entries for individuals with one Jewish parent, converts to other faiths; and those affiliated with religious cults. "We have also included many persons as Jews solely on the basis of their 'Jewish' names; undoubtedly, we have made errors" (p. xiii). It is interesting to note that the Introduction to the DAB (1928, vol. I, p. vii) similarly states that "The very term American is not free from ambiguities."

The compilers of the CDAJB looked for obituaries of the biographees, but when these were lacking, they included entries for people who were presumed to have died by 1985 without closing dates, even in cases where these could have been supplied from personal knowledge—"Leonard Bernstein, for example" (p. xi). According to the *American Jewish Year Book* (1992, p. 590), Leonard Bernstein died on Oct. 14, 1990, well before the CDAJB was published. The editors felt, however, that inconsistent policies on completing dates would have been "confusing for the reader" (p. xi). I disagree.

Bernstein's entry illustrates the sketchiness of the data supplied in the CDAJB:

Bernstein, Leonard; b. Lawrence, MA, 1918.

Harvard. Noted composer, conductor; "West Side Story," "Candide"; with NY Philharmonic. See: *EJ*; *EJ*: 1973–1982.

Who's Who in American Jewry (1980, p. 44) has an entry ten times as long; *WWAJ* is not one of the sources used by the *CDAJB*, however, although some of the persons listed in it may have died by 1985.

Marcus admits to the "telegraphic, elliptical" writing style of the entries (p. xiv), providing the rationale of saving space to include as many biographies as possible. While regretting the exclusion of many Orthodox rabbis of East European origin from the Jewish biographical sources that were indexed, the editors did not deviate from the work's objective criteria for this category of influential Jews. (There is an entry for Feinstein, Moses, although that great rabbi died after 1985.)

Organization and Design of the Work

While the scope of the work would not be clear without a careful reading of the preface, the arrangement is quite simple. There is a single A–Z sequence spanning the two volumes, which are sequentially paginated. The letters of the alphabet contained in each volume are clearly marked on the cover and spine. The entries include many abbreviations, and all of these are explained on page xvii, even those that bibliographers often assume are known to all users of their works, but which reference librarians can report account for many questions (e.g., b = born; ca = circa).

One Latinism that was not defined is "sub," used, for example, in the entry for **Menuhin, Hephzibah**, which refers to both the *UJE* [*Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*] and *EJ* [*Encyclopaedia Judaica*] "(sub Menuhin, Yehudi)." (Following up the reference to the two encyclopedias reveals that the correct spelling of Yehudi Menuhin's sister's name is Hephzibah.) Technically not an abbreviation, "sub" is part of the phrase "sub verbo," often abbreviated *s.v.* This term is defined in older dictionaries, such as Webster's (1971, p. 1818): "under the word (specified): with reference to an entry in a dictionary, index, etc.," but the current *American Heritage Dictionary* (1992) lacks an entry for the phrase and does not define *sub* in this sense.

Especially commendable is the interfiling of the abbreviations for the biographical

sources indexed with abbreviations of common terms. Many reference works separate these, even when the two categories of abbreviation are not distinguished by the use of capitals and lowercase letters, respectively. In this work, for example, *ORT* is one of the defined abbreviations; it does not represent a bibliographic source, but a corporate body.

Regrettably, there are not consistent links between the list of abbreviations and the Bibliography of Sources Cited (p. xix). The former defines *BDEAJ* as *Biographical Dictionary of Early American Jews*, and *BEOAJ* as *Biographical Encyclopedia of American Jews*. There are no "B" entries in the bibliography, however. The cited works are listed under Rosenbloom and Glassman, respectively. General tools which have abbreviations for title, such as *Dictionary of American Biography* and *Notable American Women*, are also entered in the bibliography under editor. (The focus here is not on the correctness of the main entries, merely on the ease of use of the reference work.)

The bibliography contains only one "added title entry"—from *Who's Who in American Jewry*, 1938, to the name of its editor. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* is entered under title, but its predecessors, *The Jewish Encyclopedia* and *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, are under editor. Catalogers aware of the current limitations on corporate main entry may be surprised to find *The American Jewish Year Book* entered under Jewish Publication Society of America.

The bibliography is also incomplete. The abbreviation JTA-DNB (Jewish Telegraphic Agency—Daily News Bulletin) is defined and is found often among bibliographic references at the end of biographical entries, but it is not in the list of sources. The bibliography is incomplete in another sense as well: there are several book-form compilations of American Jewish biographies listed in Brisman (1987, pp. 356–361) that were not indexed for the *CDAJB*.

Biographical questions account for a large part of reference librarians' work, and the use of biographical tools is not limited to seasoned researchers. Reference works, such as periodical indexes, which abbreviate the titles of sources always generate many queries from users who have not received bibliographic instruction. (That is why the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* recently switched from abbreviated titles to full titles.)

The following is a hypothetical sequence of steps involved in the use of the *CDAJB*:

1. The user needs extensive biographical information about a deceased American Jew, and the librarian gives him or her this tool. The user readily finds the name in the A–Z sequence.
2. Finding only brief information, the user wants to pursue the references, and has to locate the list of abbreviations.
3. To find out whether the library has the works cited, the user needs the full bibliographic data, but its primary element in the list of sources often is not a match to that of the entry given after the abbreviation.
4. The user has to locate the corresponding entry in the library's catalog and then seek the correct volume or section of the work.
5. Most libraries will probably not have all the sources cited. Special Judaica libraries are not likely to have the general sources, and vice versa; thus the reference librarian will have to refer patrons to other institutions and/or handle interlibrary loan requests.

The latter point indicates the desirability of a running head for the title of the work on every page: users often photocopy a single page from a reference work and then cannot identify its source.

The *CDAJB* does have headlines (sometimes called *guidewords*) that indicate the first and last entries on facing pages. Where entries are split between two pages, the left headline gives the first full entry; a headline for the continued entry would have been preferable. The placement of the page number on the inner margin is a good typographic choice because of the self-indexing nature of this alphabetic tool.

Between the headline and page number, which are positioned in the top margin of each page, the running title would have fit nicely. A reference to the list of abbreviations would have fit in the bottom margin, but is lacking. A nice feature is the repetition of the abbreviations list as well as the bibliography at the beginning of volume 2, which facilitates its use. The placement of the "How to Use . . ." section before the Preface in volume 1 is anomalous, but helpful to library patrons.

The boldfaced elements of each entry include full name, as well as dates and places of birth and death. Limiting the boldfacing to the name would have made the filing medium clearer. The typefaces used are attractive, and the size of type is acceptable for a reference work.

The physical aspects of the work are very nice: acid-free paper and a quality binding for a tool that is sure to be used frequently in Judaica libraries of all kinds.

Conclusions

This is a ready-reference work, a tool from which a librarian dispenses facts to library patrons. It is expensive, but the publisher has advertised a 20% discount. The price is reasonable because the *CDAJB* saves librarians' and users' time.

Like dissertation authors, the compilers have admitted to the limitations of their work. In light of the acknowledged inclusion of non-Jews and the omission of prominent Jews, one may question the validity of summary research based on this tool, which is suggested in the Preface (p. xiv).

On the micro-level, i.e., for individual biographies, the editors have anticipated error reports. Philosophically inclined reference librarians may ponder to what extent we disseminate the truth, and how often we dispense misinformation. Those familiar with the Hebrew expression *teku* (*Tishbi yetarets kushyot u-ve'ayot*, translated by Alcalay [1981, p. 2786] as "only Elijah could solve such puzzles and problems") may take a more pragmatic approach: not

every name can be distinguished from others (the modern meaning of *teku* is 'tie; draw'); it is not possible to verify every datum in a biographical dictionary from a primary source. This principle was no doubt in the minds of the members of the Association of Jewish Libraries Reference Book Award Committee when they selected this work as the winner for 1994.

Postscript

Jacob Rader Marcus died in November 1995, just short of his 100th birthday. The *CDAJB* was by then already in constant use in Judaica libraries. This work, perhaps more than any of his scholarly publications, will keep his name alive.

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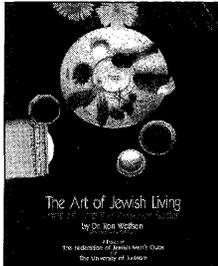
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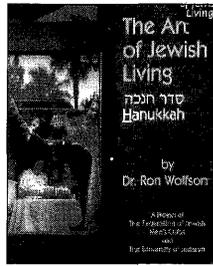
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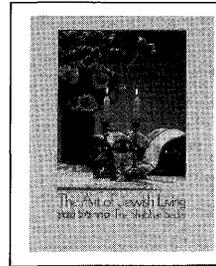
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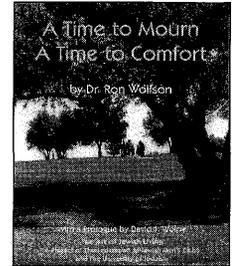
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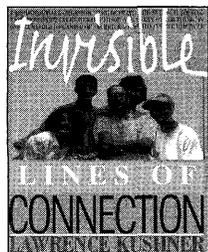
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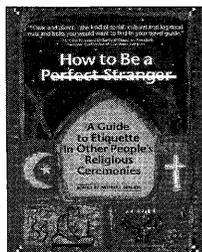
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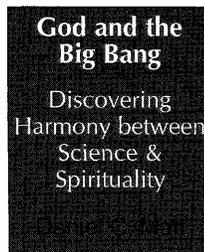
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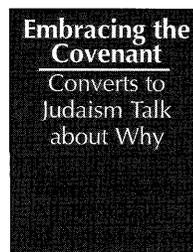
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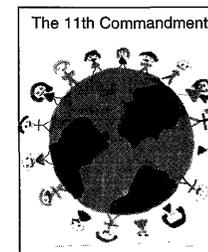
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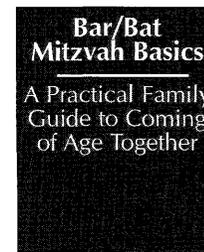
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