*World Religions: Almanac, Biographies, Primary Sources.* By J. Sydney Jones and Michael O'Neal. Ed. by Neil Schlager and Jayne Weisblatt. World Religions Reference Library. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006. 5 vols. alkaline (ISBN 1-4144-0227-7).

This set consists of a two-volume almanac, two volumes of biographies, a volume of primary sources, and a soft-cover cumulative index, all designed to appeal to and instruct young readers (middle- and high-school), in the basics and some of the details of world religion. Included throughout are black-and-white illustrations, sidebars, glossaries, timelines, bibliographies/webliographies, subject indexes, and "research and activity ideas." The "Almanac" volumes cover the history, traditions, and worldviews of the world's major and more minor religions and their sects and offshoots; also addressed are the texts and teachings, philosophies and practices, and influences on culture and society of these religions. The biographical volumes outline the lives and contributions of fifty men and women critical to the historical and contemporary development of religion. Lesser-known figures are included along with major players, and there are many biographies of people whose names the average student would not likely recognize. The "Primary Sources" volume offers eighteen excerpted writings, speeches, and sacred texts from across the religious spectrum. Primary sources are grouped into three thematic chapters: "Creation Stories and Foundation Myths," Characteristics of the Divine," and "Religion as a Guide to Living."

The *Almanac* is the most comprehensive element in scope and succeeds in laying the groundwork for more detailed or specific lines of inquiry. The biographical volumes are both interesting and well-rounded; taking the article on Abraham as an example, the story of this figure and his familial relationships is told with admirable completeness and an acknowledgment that it is part history, part legend, and part guesswork. These elements are woven into an informative whole. The "Primary Sources" volume is necessarily more limited than its companion volumes, given the scope, level, and physical size of the work; it is more representative than comprehensive. The cumulative index is very clearly laid out and user-friendly.

There are a number of recent sources that bear comparison. Christopher Partridge's *Introduction to World Religions* (Fortress Pr., 2005) may be desirable as a supplemental source to *World Religions,* with its full-color photos, maps, and diagrams, and its closer examination of the complexity of the subject matter. A source that covers similar ground on a grander scale is Martin Palmer's *The Times World Religions* (Times Bks., 2005), but this is more suitable for an adult readership. Ian Markham's *A World Religions Reader* (Blackwell, 1996) is another resource for first-time students of religion, and is somewhat similar in scope to *World Religions*. It, too, may be a welcome supplement, as Markham combines scriptural passages with classic statements of major thinkers and institutions, offering a closer focus on the role of women and enabling cross-religion comparison.

*World Religions: Almanac, Biographies, Primary Sources*

presents primarily basic and essential information. This fact, along with the tone, scope, and even the graphic design of the books, indicates this set for use in a high school or middle-school library. One overall criticism could be that the work's presentation has an innocuous quality; perhaps it could have been a little more thought-provoking or challenging through a deeper delving in some areas. But in general, it is a source capable of satisfying the curiosity of young readers and directing them to further study.—*Benedette Palazzola, Assistant Librarian, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor*

## Professional Materials
*Karen Antell*
Editor

*The Big Book of Children's Reading Lists: 100 Great, Ready-to-Use Book Lists for Educators, Librarians, Parents, and Children.* Nancy J. Keane. Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2006. 288p. $35 (ISBN 1-59158-334-9).

*The Big Book of Children's Reading Lists* contains one hundred book lists organized for easy use. This resource is divided into three parts: "School Subjects," "Character and Values," and "Genres and Themes." The first section of the book includes subjects such as "Folklore from Around the World," which is divided by countries, and "Language Arts," "Science," and "Social Studies," which are divided into themes and concepts. "Art" and "Mathematics" each have lists that include literature to assist parents, teachers, and librarians with the introduction or reinforcement of skills in those areas.

In section two, the author has organized wonderful lists of children's books for parents, teachers, and counselors. The lists cover literature that deals with tough issues such as anger management, grief, honesty, and responsibility.

The author devotes a large part of the third section to all kinds of alphabet books, memoirs of famous historical figures, and wordless and pop-up literature. Contrary to what one might expect, these books are not only for primary students. Many of these lists include highly informative nonfiction literature with facts about the ocean, animals, landscapes, and U.S. history.

The literature on each list has been published over the past decade, and every title included was still in print at the end of 2005. The author's introduction grants librarians and teachers permission to copy and use the lists in creative ways to help promote reading in their classrooms and school environments.

In addition to the lists are "Ready to Copy and Use" bookmarks of suggested reading for children. The bookmark categories include: "If you liked . . . try . . .," "If you like scary books try . . . ." The bookmarks lend themselves to use for book-talking a particular theme or genre.

The index includes book titles and author names for

easy access to information needed. This resource is an asset to any librarian who is attempting to get children interested in reading. Students in the third grade and above could use this resource to locate numerous books in a particular area of interest. This book also could be used creatively to initiate networking between teachers and school librarians, which could then lead to cooperative lesson planning.—*Jamie Johnson, Library Media Specialist, McKinley Elementary School, Norman, Oklahoma*

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*Creating Database-Backed Library Web Pages: Using Open Source Tools.* Stephen R. Westman. Chicago: ALA, 2006. 288p. $48 (ISBN 0-8389-0910-8).

In this book, Westman has made an admirable attempt to elucidate the arcane and mysterious world of the technology behind Web services. Geared toward librarians of all types who have a basic understanding of HTML and have the ability to create HTML forms, this book supplies a conceptual foundation for many terms often used regarding Web services and the steps involved in creating database-backed Web pages. The author indicates that this book by itself will not explain absolutely every detail of the technology under discussion, and the book's companion Web site provides a bibliography for further reading. However, in some places, more complete information would be useful in the book itself.

The book introduces the reader to a variety of technological concepts and activities, such as relational databases, basic programming, report building, and data maintenance applications. However, the extensive companion material for the work alone demonstrates that creating database-backed Web pages is not for everyone. A project of this type requires a level of technical understanding well beyond the HTML prerequisites mentioned. Advanced technical understanding is necessary even to begin to "program along" with the author. Adding to the difficulty (through no fault of the author), on the companion site, Web pages sometimes would not load, and, when this reviewer followed links to downloadable software, the instructions for downloading were sometimes confusing or unclear.

To maximize the intended utility of the book, downloading software and running a server on a machine is necessary. Unless a personal computer is used, there is also the issue of institutional security that could lead to uncomfortable encounters with library or campus IT departments. The thirty-two-page (!) set-up file found on the companion site even includes advice on dealing with potential complaints from network administrators.

The ability to put into practice or perform the activities one is reading about is, indeed, a powerful learning tool. This would be an ideal book for a class on building database-backed Web pages, but it would be quite ambitious for intelligent librarians without technological experience and training.—*Kathleen Fleming, Reference Coordinator, Science and Engineering Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan*

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*Information Literacy Assessment: Standards-Based Tools and Assignments.* Teresa Y. Neely. Chicago: ALA, 2006. 218p. $40 (ISBN 0-8389-0914-0).

Teresa Y. Neely, library director at the University of New Mexico and formerly at the University of Maryland (UM), and her colleagues from UM have written a useful, practical guide to information literacy assessment based on the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education. In this ten-chapter book, chapters 3 through 7 each address one of the five standards, providing examples and recommending types of assessment queries and assignments for performance indicators and related outcomes (e.g., *Outcome 1.1.e*: *Identifies key concepts and terms that describe the information need*). Chapter 8 suggests other areas to assess that are not covered in the ACRL standards, such as the nature of the student/faculty relationship and the demographics of students. Chapters 9 and 10 focus on developing and automating an assessment survey instrument.

The real strength of the book is the work the authors have done for us in their literature review of more than seventy existing information literacy assessment instruments. Of the surveys reviewed by the authors, only a few (e.g., UM, Baltimore County Survey) were developed around the ACRL standards. For libraries that wish to develop a comprehensive information literacy assessment survey using the ACRL standards as a benchmark, this book is a valuable resource. On a smaller scale, for instruction librarians who want to measure student learning for one or two outcomes, many ideas can be found in the assessment queries and assignments sections throughout the book.

Some chapters exhibit greater readability than others. Several chapters would benefit from the use of bullet points or additional section headers. For example, in the section on "Do's and Don'ts of Writing Queries" in chapter 9, a numbered or bulleted list to follow from point to point would be helpful.

This book certainly provides a place to start the discussion on assessment. Both instruction librarians and library administrators will find the appendix listing all the survey instruments reviewed and the bibliography especially useful.—*Sherise Kimura, Reference/Electronic Resources Librarian, University of San Francisco*

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*Less Is More: A Practical Guide to Weeding School Library Collections.* Donna J. Baumbach and Linda L. Miller. Chicago: ALA, 2006. 204p. $32 (ISBN 0-8389-0919-1).

Baumbach and Miller have created a practical tool for school library media center directors and librarians to use in keeping their collections vibrant and relevant in the changing landscape of school libraries. Weeding is an integral part of collection development. This volume guides school library professionals through that process with criteria and models helpful to the unique type of library found in pre-K–12 educational institutions.