

GENERAL REFERENCE BOOKS FOR ETHNIC STUDIES

One of the most definitive and useful background sources for almost every ethnic group is Stephen Thernstrom's, "Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups" (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1980). It assembles the basic information about the multitude of people who make up the population of the United States. It is a succinct, authoritative synthesis of the origins and histories of 106 ethnic groups, with twenty-nine thematic essays, eighty-seven maps, and a critical bibliography for each section.

~ Paul Wasserman and Alice E. Kennington, eds., "Ethnic Information Sources of the United States," 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1983) assembles in one source, information about the various ethnic groups that comprise the U.S. populace. The work is intended for use by individuals whose ancestors or relatives belong to particular ethnic groups, and by students, educators, librarians, and others interested in learning about distinctive ethnic lines and the countries from which they are drawn. It is also for those who require information about the details of history, culture, customs, values, politics, and problems of ethnic groups in the United States. Topics and resources include standard ethnic sources and research institutions, as well as more obscure information (such as embassies, ethnic fraternal organizations, ethnic newspaper collections, dealers of ethnic books, and ethnic museums) that may be especially useful for genealogists. "Ethnic Information Sources" indicates, for example, that the American Irish Historical Society (<http://www.aihs.org/>) maintains a library of more than 25,000 volumes on Irish history and genealogy and the Irish in America.

~ Wayne Charles Miller's "Comprehensive Bibliography for the Study of American Minorities," 2 vols. (New York University Press, 1976), is a valuable ethnic source with an exhaustive, though dated, bibliography. It is divided into sections on the geographic areas from which ethnic people came: Africa, Europe (includes French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Irish, Jewish, Greek, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Icelandic, Finnish, and Scandinavian), Eastern Europe and the Balkans, Asia, the islands (Puerto Rico and Cuba), Mexico, and Native American. Each section follows more or less the same format. Under "The Arab-American Experience," for example, is a brief history of Arabs in the United States, followed by:

- Bibliographies of Bibliographies
- Periodicals
- Essays and Indexes Dealing with Periodicals

- Periodicals in English
- Periodicals in Arabic
- History and Sociology
- Education and Language
- Religion
- Biography and Autobiography
- Literature
- Literary Criticism
- Folklore
- Arts

~ Stephanie Bernardo's "Ethnic Almanac" (Garden City, NY: Dolphin Books, Doubleday & Co., 1981) takes a lighter yet interesting and useful look at twenty-five of the largest ethnic groups in the United States. The first chapter of the book is devoted to the "First Immigrants" (American Indians). The "Almanac" also provides a Brief Chronology of American Immigration and focuses on the "Ethnic Top Ten"--Italians, Germans, Canadians, British, Poles, Mexicans, Russians, Irish, Austrians, and Swedes. Another chapter is dedicated to the "Unwilling Immigrants--The Black Experience in America."

~ John D. Buenker, Nicholas C. Burkel, and Rudolph J. Vecoli's "Immigration and Ethnicity: A Guide to Information Sources" (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1977) contains more than 1,599 annotated bibliographic entries. African Americans and Native Americans are not included; foreign language materials, which at least equal in volume those in English, are seldom cited; and only a sampling of thousands of doctoral dissertations devoted to immigration and ethnic topics appear in the guide. As the compilers note, to have included those categories of materials would have made it a multi-volume work, and to "attempt a bibliography of immigration and ethnicity literature is like taking a snapshot of an avalanche." However the compilers' selection of material is excellent. It identifies most of the major published works available through the mid-1970s.

~ Lubomyr Wynar's "Encyclopedic Directory of Ethnic Organizations in the United States" (Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1975), as its title suggests, is a guide to major ethnic organizations, such as cultural, historical, and financial societies. The "Encyclopedic Directory" provides addresses for some 1,475 major ethnic organizations representing seventy-three ethnic groups and briefly describes the nature of their holdings, including in most cases, references to printed ethnic sources held by each organization.

~ Lubomyr and Anna T. Wynar's "Encyclopedic of Ethnic Newspapers and Periodicals in the United States" (Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1976) is another dated but valuable source of information on printed ethnic

materials. There are hundreds of entries that will be of incalculable value to the family historian in this volume.

~ Jessie Carney Smith's "Ethnic Genealogy: A Research Guide" (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1983) is essentially a beginner's guide to genealogical research. Section 1 of the volume discusses Librarians and Genealogical Research, Basic Sources for Genealogical Research, Library Records and Research, and Researching Family History. Section 2 covers two major repositories for genealogical research: the National Archives and Records Service and the Genealogical Society of Utah Library (now known as the National Archives and Records Administration and the Family History Library, respectively). Section 3 is the best reason for using Ethnic Genealogy; it covers four significant groups: American Indians, Asian Americans, African Americans, and Hispanics. Each ethnic section provides the fundamental principles for starting research, some case studies, document samples, and dated but useful bibliographies for each group.

~ Alice Eichholz, ed., "Ancestry's Red Book: American State, County, and Town Sources," rev. ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Ancestry, 1992 <http://shop.ancestry.com/anredbook.html>) is an expansive guide to the most useful resources in each of the fifty states and the District of Columbia. Every state's chapter includes a brief historical background discussion, including settlement patterns that will provide helpful background information for ethnic research. Each state chapter concludes with a section titled "Special Focus Category" in which ethnic sources specific to the particular state are described. Its relatively recent publication date gives "Red Book" a distinct advantage over many of the sources mentioned above. It cites a great number of works not yet published when other major ethnic reference sources were released.

ETHNIC RESEARCH COLLECTIONS

Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies
Center for Immigrant Research
18 South 7th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106-3794
<http://www.libertynet.org/~balch/>

Immigration History Research Center
University of Minnesota
826 Berry Street
Saint Paul, MN 55114
<http://www.umn.edu/ihr/>

Family History Library
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

35 North West Temple
Salt Lake City, UT 84150
<http://www.familysearch.org/>
SourceGuide
<http://familysearch.org/sg/>
Family History Library Catalog
<http://familysearch.org/Search/searchcatalog.asp>

Center for Migration Studies of New York, Inc.
209 Flagg Place
Staten Island, NY 10304-1199
<http://www.cmsny.org/index.htm>

Detroit Public Library
Burton Historical Collection
5201 Woodward Avenue
Detroit, MI 48202
http://www.detroit.lib.mi.us/special_collections.htm

Newberry Library
60 West Walton Street
Chicago, IL 60610-3305
<http://www.newberry.org/>

Allen County Public Library
900 Webster Street
Fort Wayne, IN 46802
<http://www.acpl.lib.in.us/>

HOW TO FIND ETHNIC WORKS IN A LIBRARY CATALOG

A surprising number of ethnic histories can be found in public and university libraries as well as within separate ethnic collections. Some are very obscure sources, so it is wise to check card or computer catalogs under any possible category. Use the ethnic group as the subject heading, for example:

Country: United States--Germans

State: Michigan--Dutch

County: Pierce County, Washington--Scandinavians

City or town: Detroit, Michigan--Poles

Some catalogs list the ethnic group first, followed by the locality, such as Quakers in Pennsylvania, or Italians in New York City. Also look for Library of Congress subject headings, such as "Colorado--Minorities," "Virginia--Societies," or "New York City--Emigration and Immigration."