Science Reference Materials for Children and Young People

RICHARD L. STRICKLER

This is a list of recent science reference books covering subjects from mathematics and earth science to medicine, chosen with both students and teachers in mind. We sometimes underestimate the ability of some students to comprehend the printed word, but we do know that if a student has any background in a subject he can very often read about it beyond his grade level. Reference books, of course, are for both the inexpert student and the more advanced student, for the one who may or may not need help in looking for bits and pieces of information that he will put together in his own way, and for the other who, on his own, can find and make use of much fuller information that will satisfy him as it is.

The librarian-media specialist in both school and public libraries must choose books that fill the needs of the school curriculum as well as the needs of the students, including material for any special projects they may have: science fairs, science award competitions, etc. A record of books that circulate is easy to keep, and from it the need for more materials can be ascertained; then more books can be selected and purchased that enhance the circulating collection. It is difficult, however, to keep use records of reference books, so the librarian needs to be almost clairvoyant and must be able to anticipate needs.

There is a trend in some school libraries away from the separate reference collection, letting all reference books circulate on an "overnight" basis. Although the books are still marked "Reference," they are shelved with other books in their regular Dewey classes, thereby putting all books on the same subject in one place in the library.

One problem that often confronts elementary school librarians is the identification of specimens that students bring to school which the teacher cannot identify. The foresighted librarian will have a stock of simple keys that will aid in the identification. In these cases a call to the

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area library will be of no use, except, perhaps, for direction to a reference book that is already in the school's library. Good sets of zoological and botanical keys are essential for all grade levels, and copies should be available for circulation as well as for reference. Problems in other areas can be dealt with in the same way, by having the proper tools readily available.

One factor limiting any collection is the amount of money available. Another factor that might affect a school library collection is the nearness of good public library service. Outside service may be supplied by local, regional, county, or area libraries; by college or university libraries; or by state libraries. If any of these libraries is close enough to drive to, or if there is a statewide library network, as in New Jersey, then reference service is as close as the nearest public library or even the nearest telephone, and many reference materials can be dispensed with in the school library. Telephone reference service is good for the short one-fact question but not for identification of an insect, a dinosaur bone, or an organic formula. Good library service that can be had by going to a public library will be helpful to those who can travel by car. But in the long run, if the material can be acquired by the school library then that is where it belongs, and the other libraries can be used to supplement the school library's collection.

Books have been included in the list (1) if the title fits under the general heading of science or technology, (2) if the information in the book can be used by students or teachers in grades K through 12, (3) if the title fills a need or an interest of students or teachers in grades K through 12, and (4) if the title is in the 1973 edition of *Books in Print (BIP)*.

A note on the grade level code used in the list: a number of books have been included which perhaps cannot be used by some students on their own, but which can be used with help from a teacher or a librarian. Restricting books by reading levels would exclude much valuable material from those students who may lack the necessary skill but who have high motivation. The code is: 1 (K-3), 2 (4-6), 3 (7-8), 4 (9-12), 5 (teachers and librarians).

*Editor's note:* Because of space limitations, books published before 1964 have not been included even though there are a number of excellent older titles still in print, although usually in rather specialized areas, which have not been superseded. For the same reason, some important publishers' series have not been included even though the titles are noteworthy and would find place in both reference and
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circulating collections of flora, fauna, rocks, shells, stars, and other “things” of nature.

All of these series are reasonably priced. Some series examples include: (1) Peterson Field Guide Series published by Houghton-Mifflin, 19 titles; (2) Picture-Key Nature Series published by William C. Brown, How To Know books, 32 titles; (3) Golden Field Guides, 5 so far, and the smaller format Golden Nature Guides (21 in print) and Golden Science Guides (8 in print) published by Western; (4) Putnam’s Nature Field Books, 18 in print; (5) Doubleday Nature Field Books, 18 in print; (5) Doubleday Nature Guide Series, 9 in print; and many publications of government agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture Yearbooks and the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission’s Understanding the Atom Series and The World of Atom Series, both of which are free.

The brief, somewhat standardized annotations were condensed from the compiler’s notes on the titles and up-dated if necessary. Some titles, including the bibliographic aids, have been added by the editor. The prices, mostly from the 1973 BIP, are advisory only and are, of course, subject to change.

Recent Science Reference Books

General Science Encyclopedias and Dictionaries

An advanced work, for advanced students and for teachers of advanced science courses. 4, 5

A browsing set divided into 15 groups or departments with excellent illustrations. Index in last volume; separate paperback indexes available from publisher. 1, 2, 3, 4

Britannica Yearbook of Science and the Future. Encyclopaedia Britannica, annual. Price varies
Updates the science parts of the EB. Excellent drawings and photographs. Particularly useful for libraries not getting the new EB every year. 3, 4, 5

Collocott, T. C., ed. (Chambers) Dictionary of Science and Technology. Barnes and Noble, 1972. $23.50
Comprehensive, up to date, clear definitions but with some British bias in spelling and usage. 4, 5

Dictionary format with signed articles varying in length and in degree
of difficulty. Clear photographs and diagrams, some in color. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5


Very thorough coverage of all fields of science; fuller, more specialized than most general encyclopedias. Clear illustrations. 4, 5


Topical survey articles plus updating of parent set between editions. Excellent photographs and other illustrations. 4, 5


A one-volume work with cross-references and index. A study guide aids readers in seeing interrelationships among the sciences. 2, 3, 4, 5

*Science Year: The World Book Science Annual.* Field Enterprises, annual. Price varies

Updates the science parts of the WB. Excellent drawings and photographs. Particularly useful for libraries not getting the new WB each year. 2, 3, 4, 5


One volume, dictionary format, cross-referenced; definitions vary in length from one sentence to several pages, and in difficulty. 4, 5

510 Mathematics (and Computers)

Abramowitz, Milton, and Stegun, Irene A., eds. *Handbook of Mathematical Functions with Formulas, Graphs, and Mathematical Tables.* Dover, 1964. $6.95

Covers everything in mathematics; subject index, notation index, Greek letter table, notation tables. 4, 5


Terms defined; portraits and articles on great mathematicians. Cross-referenced. 2, 3, 4


Complete dictionary with good short definitions, plus appendices, log tables, mortality table. 4, 5


For the advanced student; a math teacher or a librarian may be needed to help students use the book. Good for teacher reference. 4, 5


Similar to the *CRC Handbook* above, but less expensive. 4, 5


Alphabetically arranged with long thorough definitions of terms, but with a minimum of illustration. 4, 5
Science Reference Materials

Good basic vocabulary clearly defined. 3, 4, 5

A 14,000-term dictionary plus 13 chapters of handbook material on systems, languages, flowcharts, models, the industry, etc. For teachers. 4, 5

520 Astronomy

Over 200 excellent photos of the moon's surface taken by Earth observatories and by lunar astronauts. 2, 3, 4, 5

For beginners of all ages, introduction clarifies use of maps. The maps look simple, but the subject is complex. 2, 3, 4, 5

Superb illustrations, excellent index, great for browsing. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Dictionary format; covers astronomy and space exploration. Definitions range from one sentence to two pages. Cross-referenced. 2, 3, 4, 5

Elementary level, simple but thorough, with good color illustrations and a good index. 1, 2, 3

Dictionary format with good illustrations; definitions and articles range from one sentence to several pages. 4, 5

530 Physics-540 Chemistry (and Mineralogy)

Over 90 chapters by subject experts; for advanced students with good mathematics backgrounds. Extensive index. 4, 5

CRC Handbook of Chemistry and Physics. 54th ed. Chemical Rubber Co., 1973, about $26
"The" handbook, comprehensive, thorough, authoritative, but users may need guidance from a science teacher or a science librarian. 4, 5

Covers chemical and physical properties of elements, compounds, minerals, industrial materials; includes many excellent tables. 4, 5

Includes 55,000 definitions giving both American and British viewpoints. Concise, thorough coverage with numerous cross-references. 4, 5


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Seeks to cover all aspects of chemistry in over 800 signed articles, both theoretical and practical. References, cross-references, index. 4, 5

Hawley, Gessner G. Condensed Chemical Dictionary. 8th ed. Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1971. $27.50
Thorough coverage of terms in general use in chemistry, the process industries, pharmaceuticals, etc.; includes trademarks, packaging. 4, 5

An old standby in the field of mineralogy, with both a general index and a minerals index. 4, 5

Concise definitions with see and see also references; illustrations are organic formulae. 4, 5

Chemical and microbiological hazards of various kinds; first aid; eye care; safety programs; equipment; lab animals. Bibliographies, index. 4, 5

550 Earth Sciences

Concise definitions, clear and understandable. List of prefixes and suffixes used in geology. Has British flavor. 2, 3, 4, 5

Subsequent volumes will cover geophysics, structure, and petrology; applied geology and sedimentology; stratigraphy and paleontology; and world geology (plus biographies). Dictionary format, in-depth treatment; articles signed, some cross-referenced to other volumes in set; bibliographies; indexes. 4, 5

Chapters based on rock origins: from the depths, from the sky, from solutions, etc. Good illustrations. 2, 3, 4, 5

Todd, David K., ed. Water Encyclopedia. Water Information Center (Port Washington, N.Y.), 1970. $27.50
Includes nine chapters of resources and use tables: climate and precipitation, surface water, water quality, pollution control, agencies, etc. 3, 4, 5

Science Reference Materials

Indies, Caribbean, Bermuda, 1966. $2.50; Vol. 4: Asia, 1967. $3.25.
Inexpensive guide to climate and weather around the world. 3, 4, 5

570 Biology

Excellent photographs and photomicrographs. Index in each volume and set index in Vol. 8. Note: Vols. 1-3 may be out of print. 2, 3, 4, 5

Signed articles with bibliographies for further reading. Covers economic side of marine life. Good index. 3, 4, 5

Detailed, signed articles in dictionary format, for the advanced student and teacher. Excellent illustrations. Index. Bibliographies. 4, 5

Introduction to the microscope and its use and to the preparation and use of microscope slides, in botany, zoology, medical technology. 3, 4, 5

Includes all important genera, roots of terms, combining forms, key to pronunciation, clear definitions. 3, 4, 5

Parker, Bertha M. New Golden Treasury of Natural History. Golden, 1968. $5.95
Excellent introduction to the natural sciences, in color. A browsing book with an index. 1, 2, 3

For students of all levels. Concise definitions in nontechnical, accurate language of some 12,000 terms; subject-field usage cited. 3, 4, 5

580 Botany

Chinery, Michael. A Science Dictionary of the Plant World. Watts, 1969. $4.95
Brief, simple definitions; good color drawings. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

De Wit, H. C. Plants of the World. 3 vols. Dutton, 1966-69. $19.95 each

Useful for identification. Divided into wet places, woodland, field and
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wayside, and by spring, summer, late summer, fall. Indexes. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Grimm, William C. Recognizing Native Shrubs. Stackpole, 1966. $7.95
For identifying particular plants within larger native shrub families. Bibliography, glossary, indexes. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Kingsbury, J. M. Poisonous Plants of the United States and Canada. 3d ed. Prentice-Hall, 1964. $17.25
To confirm identification of plants whose parts are poisonous. Includes many common weeds and garden plants. Good index; bibliography. 4, 5

Introduction to plants that have been brought into the U.S. from other countries. All illustrations are in color. 1, 2, 3

Arranged by botanical families; excellent drawings and color photographs. Indexes to common and scientific names. Take your pick! 2, 3, 4, 5

For identifying or selecting trees and shrubs for the garden. Covers 500 of the more common species in the U.S. and Canada. 2, 3, 4, 5

Broad coverage, concise definitions; illustrations are mostly of organic molecules. 4, 5

590 Zoology

Thorough treatment with good drawings; keys for identification; good general and regional bibliographies. 2, 3, 4, 5

Arranged by standard biological system; includes descriptions, ranges, breeding habits, food; good drawings, good index. 4, 5

Brief, simple definitions; good color drawings. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Part I: prehistory, birds and man, ecology, habits, survival, conservation; Part II: for identification; good drawings, photographs. 2, 3, 4, 5

Science Reference Materials

Reptiles; Vols. 7-9: Birds; Vols. 10-13: Mammals.
Comprehensive coverage. Has animal dictionary, four-language common-name index, scientific name index, volume indexes, bibliographies. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Simple introduction to zoology with good color illustrations. 1, 2, 3

Good definitions but no illustrations. Appendix is a taxonomic outline of the animal kingdom including extinct animals. 3, 4, 5

Simple introduction to birds; illustrations all in color. 1, 2, 3

Stix, Hugh, and Stix, Marguerite. The Shell. Abrams, 1968. $28.50
Excellent guide to identification; covers the world. "500 million years of inspired design." 2, 3, 4, 5

Covers range, appearance, size, food, habitat of over 2,000 species. Excellent glossary, bibliography, indexes, but drawings vary in scale. 3, 4, 5

Comprehensive, giving common and scientific names, habitats, ranges, size, abundance, color, natural history. Good photographs, bibliography. 4, 5

600 Technology

Covers modern trades, industry, shopwork, technical procedures. 3, 4, 5

Swezey, Kenneth M. Formulas, Methods, Tips and Data for Home and Workshop. Harper, 1969. $7.95
Very practical. Selection, finishing, preservation of wood; finishing, plating, working of metals; paints, paint removers; arts, crafts; etc. 2, 3, 4, 5

Over 400 common technical concepts and products described and explained; very clear diagrammatic illustrations. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

610 Medicine and Health

General medical information and guidance covering the human body, mental and emotional health, drugs, and so on. Useful illustrations. 4, 5

Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary. 24th ed. Saunders, 1965. $13.50
Comprehensive coverage. Includes section on medical etymology. Few but excellent plate illustrations. 3, 4, 5

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Fishbein, Morris, ed. New Illustrated Medical and Health Encyclopedia. 4 vols. McKay, 1970. $39.95
    Popular treatment, dictionary format. Index in Vol. 4. Could be good for health assignments. 3, 4, 5
    Standard work, frequently updated. Clear illustrations. Sections on embryology, anatomy, osteology, joints, muscles, nerves, heart, etc. 4, 5
    Good introduction to the human body and its anatomy. All illustrations in color. 1, 2, 3
    Concise definitions, few illustrations. Appendixes on pharmaceutical preparations, blood groups, lab analysis, Latin terms, etc. 4, 5
    Simpler explanations than Dorland or Stedman, but cheaper. Drawings and excellent photographs. 3, 4, 5

621.38 Electronics

    Standard manual, reference work, covering operation of amateur radio communication equipment, concepts, policy, regulations. 4, 5
    Covers fundamentals of construction, elementary theory, regulations; some more complicated apparatus, solid-state devices, mobile equipment. 4, 5
    Covers 16,338 terms more completely than an unabridged dictionary does. Good illustrations. 3, 4, 5

629 Automotive and Space

    Photographs, color plates, abbreviations, glossary, Anglo-American terminology, index to personalities, index to component parts makers. 2, 3, 4, 5
    Over 50,000 terms. Tables of planets, satellites, constellations, early U.S. and U.S.S.R. launchings. 2, 3, 4, 5
Taylor, John W. Aircraft. Grosset, 1972. $3.99, library binding
    Simple introduction to aircraft and their history. Good drawings and index. 1, 2, 3
Science Reference Materials

630 Agriculture Including Animal Husbandry

The official publication of the AKC. Excellent descriptions, illustrations, and "point" scale for each breed. Glossary, index. 2, 3, 4, 5

Brady, Irene. America's Horses and Ponies. Houghton Mifflin, 1969. $9.95
Scale drawings, detailed descriptions of all breeds of horses and ponies and many related animals. Includes directory. 3, 4, 5

Cust, George, and Bird, Peter. Tropical Freshwater Aquaria. Grosset, 1971. $3.99, library binding
Simple introduction to tropical fish and aquarium care. All illustrations are in color. 1, 2, 3

Brady, Irene. America's Horses and Ponies. Houghton Mifflin, 1969. $9.95
Scale drawings, detailed descriptions of all breeds of horses and ponies and many related animals. Includes directory. 3, 4, 5

Cust, George, and Bird, Peter. Tropical Freshwater Aquaria. Grosset, 1971. $3.99, library binding
Simple introduction to tropical fish and aquarium care. All illustrations are in color. 1, 2, 3

Gives identification, care, common and scientific names of ornamental plants often found in homes and greenhouses. Good illustrations. 3, 4, 5

Some 280 breeds are described, aided by 1,100 illustrations. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Care and treatment of trees: planting, fertilizing, pruning, surgery, pest and fungi description and control. Site suggestions; illustrations. 3, 4, 5

Descriptions, standards, characteristics of breeds; anatomy, health problems; associations, shows; photographs, drawings. 3, 4, 5

Diseases listed under scientific names so a teacher or a librarian may have to help students in using the work. Comprehensive. Index. 4, 5

Pictures and describes over 220 species; common names, scientific names, distribution maps; clear drawings, ample text. 2, 3, 4, 5

Covers diseases, chemical treatment, plant pathogens, specific host-plant diseases. Ag experiment station list, glossary, bibliography, index. 3, 4, 5

Wyman, Donald. (Diane Harris, ed.) Wyman's Gardening Encyclopedia. Macmillan, 1971. $17.50
Covers description, scientific names, selection, growing, new techniques, fertilizing practices. Well illustrated. 2, 3, 4, 5

677 Textiles

American Fabrics Magazine, ed. Encyclopedia of Textiles. 2nd ed. Prentice-Hall, 1972. $89.95
Covers both man-made and natural fibers, their origins, history, inventors, fabric names, design, dyeing, weaving, testing. Dictionary. 2, 3, 4, 5
Basically a dictionary plus U.S. fabric statistics, U.S. man-made fibers, natural fibers and their sources, and so on. 2, 3, 4, 5

**Biography**

Will include 4,500 scientists and mathematicians from every region and period, similar in format to DAB and DNB. Bibliographies. 3, 4, 5

Concise biographies of American scientists with doctorates and/or with demonstrated abilities as by publication or achievement. 3, 4, 5

Short biographies of 1,195 scientists from ancient times to the present, chronologically arranged with complete subject and name index. 2, 3, 4, 5

One or two pages each, with portrait sketch, on life and important contributions of scientists in the forefront of modern science. 3, 4, 5

Some 30,000 scientists from antiquity to the present, in typical condensed format but with ancients in essay form. Users may need help. 3, 4, 5

**Bibliographic and Other Aids**

*Applied Science & Technology Index*, covering 225 periodicals, and *Biological & Agricultural Index*, covering 189, can be useful to both teachers and advanced students even though the library gets only a small number of the periodicals covered. H. W. Wilson Co., service basis. 4, 5

Selected and annotated list of 2,441 books in pure and applied sciences and mathematics for junior/senior high students, college undergraduates, and nonspecialists. 4, 5

———-. *AAAS Science Book List for Children*. 3d ed. AAAS, 1972. $8.95
Selected and annotated list of science and math books for elementary school children and for children's collections in school and public libraries. 5

American Association for the Advancement of Science. *AAAS Science Books*. AAAS, 1965-. $12/year
Current science and math books critically reviewed by scientists. Lists about 1,000 books and many science films each year, kindergarten through college level and for nonspecialists. 5

Comprehensive citation list to some 4,000 books, journals, articles, and other publications concerned with current issues of science and society. 5
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