



Buyer's Guide to Encyclopedias

Books Reviewed:

[Buyer's Guide to Encyclopedias](#) [1]

Issue:

[84](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Eleanor von Schweinitz](#) [3]

Not to be chosen:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

0

A multi-volume encyclopaedia is a considerable investment for a school (or a family), so making the right choice is especially important. Even finding out what exists can be a problem - and then there's the question of comparative strengths and weaknesses and suitability for different ages and stages. First published in 1988 and now into its fifth revision, Nicholas Tucker's 48-page **Buyer's Guide** offers a friendly helping hand to those wanting an answer to all these questions. Starting with a lively introduction on the uses of encyclopaedias and a checklist of points to look out for in their assessment, he goes on to examine nine multi-volume encyclopaedias currently available in the UK. He is especially good at conveying the flavour of each set, how user-friendly they are in text, illustration and retrieval devices and whether they have undue American bias (five of the nine sets are edited in the United States). The assessment of subject coverage is rather more patchy and judgement is less certain when it comes to age/ability suitability. A further eight pages of tabulated data (consisting of 30 columns of comparative figures) allow a comparison of such matters as number of words, pages, articles, illustrations (b/w, coloured, photos, artwork, maps), index entries, cross references, etc. Although this information is supplied by the publishers and so subject to obvious reservations, it does provide a further comparative dimension to the assessment of each set. There is some evidence that there has not been a complete updating of all the information for the 1993 revision, nonetheless this pamphlet is a bargain at £2.75 - whether you are considering laying out £125 for the **Oxford Children's Encyclopedia** or £1438 for **Encyclopaedia Britannica**.

Running Order:

1

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[1] <http://w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/buyers-guide-to-encyclopedias>

[2] <http://w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/84>

[3] <http://w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/eleanor-von-schweinitz>