

GUIDE TO THE STUDY AND USE OF REFERENCE BOOKS

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Guide to the Study and Use of Reference Books by Alice Bertha Kroeger & Isadore Gilbert Mudge

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ALICE BERTHA KROEGER & ISADORE GILBERT MUDGE

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STUDY AND USE OF
REFERENCE BOOKS**

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BY

ALICE BERTHA KROEGER

THIRD EDITION, REVISED THROUGHOUT AND MUCH ENLARGED

BY

ISADORE GILBERT MUDGE

Reference Librarian, Columbia University

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

This manual is a guide, designed primarily to help library assistants, library school students, college students, teachers, and users of libraries in general, in gaining a knowledge of reference books quickly. It does not pretend to be complete. The reference books and bibliographies included in this list are necessarily limited, first to those of a strictly reference character, and, secondly, to the most useful works in the English language, with some exceptions in other languages. It is obviously impossible, without exceeding the limits of one volume, to include all of the important works of reference in foreign languages, which, though often of more value than the corresponding English books, still are of restricted use owing to the comparatively small number of readers of foreign languages who frequent our libraries.

Reference books which are limited to the use of the specialist have been in like manner usually omitted. Out-of-print books have occasionally been mentioned because they are to be found in the older libraries. It sometimes happens that the best reference book on a subject is out of print.

Almost all books of reference possess defects as well as merits; it is difficult indeed to find one that is perfect. At the same time they are essential to a well-equipped library. The annotations of the titles herein contained are largely of a descriptive character, showing for what purposes the books mentioned are especially useful.

Besides encyclopedias and dictionaries which give direct aid, the reader will have to consult more elaborate treatises for further information. Bibliographies are guides to these. A knowledge of bibliography, therefore, forms an important part in the preparation of the student. The most useful reference department will include bibliographies of special subjects along with the encyclopedias of those subjects. It is to be regretted that books belonging to the class Bibliography are as a rule kept in the cataloger's room or the librarian's office, not in the reference department where they would be useful to the public. In a large library, such an important printed catalog as that of the Peabody Institute Library and a bibliographical work like the United States catalog and supplement, should by all means be kept where the public can have easy access to them even if it is necessary to duplicate such works.

This manual will also serve as a guide in the selection of reference books for a library. The prices given are the publishers' prices, and the lowest price is usually quoted. Books can often be obtained at a discount or picked up from time to time at auction or second-hand stores at a much reduced price. Reference books are expensive, and few libraries can afford to keep up with new editions or even with recent authorities. In many cases new editions are not worth the cost. They are frequently made from the same plates as the earlier editions, with slight alterations, not of sufficient importance to warrant the expense involved in their purchase. A suggestive list of one hundred reference books for a small library will be found at the end of the volume.

The selection of the books in this volume has been made from a study of the reference departments of the principal libraries of Philadelphia, Boston, New York, St. Louis, and Washington, and practically covers the course of study in reference books as pursued in the Drexel Institute Library School. Other library schools also give similar courses.

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