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### **Editorial From: Reference Reviews, Volume 24, Issue 4**

Despite the risk of being considered repetitious, it is difficult not to begin this column by again commenting on the current reference publishing focus on China and global warming. A new offering on the latter topic is *The Encyclopedia of Global Warming Science and Technology* (RR 2010/175) from Greenwood. More modest in size than some competing works and concentrating on the “facts” with little to comfort the “sceptics”, or “contrarians” as the book labels them, this is a useful contribution especially suited to situations where the underlying science is a key concern. Similar titles dealing with climate change in all its aspects continue to pour from the presses of both big and small reference publishers. Examples in the reviewing pipeline include the *Politics of Climate Change* from Routledge, a volume in the publisher’s ongoing *Politics of ...* series, and the three volume *Encyclopedia of Global Warming* from Salem Press. Turning to China, amongst several titles relating to the country reviewed in this issue is the *Historical Dictionary of Modern China (1800-1949)* (RR 2010/199). Released as the 25th volume in the publisher’s *Historical Dictionaries of Ancient Civilizations and Historical Eras* series this will usefully sit alongside the 2007 second edition of the *Historical Dictionary of the People’s Republic of China* (Sullivan, 2007) (RR 2008/241). The star of the new China titles reviewed here however, alongside which the latest Scarecrow offering seems almost routine, is the five volume *Berkshire Encyclopedia of China* (RR 2010/195).

This major set is from Massachusetts based Berkshire Publishing, a company rapidly developing a reputation for innovative reference titles less marked by the American-centric approach that flavours so many reference works. Also available online through annual subscription, *Berkshire Encyclopedia of China* contains 800 articles from an international team of 300 contributors, including a small but significant number from China. In addition to our review, it has enjoyed wide critical acclaim gaining a coveted listing as a *Booklist* Editor’s Choice for 2009. With this success it is not surprising that Berkshire have already announced a second edition. This will update many articles and include a wide range of new material: “we are (writes Berkshire CEO Karen Christensen) extending certain categories, notably internet and communication media, and business (both historic and contemporary). We’re also particularly keen to provide information on environmental issues so again we’re adding new articles as well as updating. Interactions between China and other countries is of vital importance and goes back many centuries, so we’re planning to include more on individuals, companies, events and on China’s relations with many more countries” (Christensen, 2010). Although other encyclopedic sets on China have recently appeared, notably the four volume *Encyclopedia of Modern China* (Pong, 2009) (review forthcoming), Berkshire’s readiness to update and expand a work so soon after initial launch could well see it established as the reference standard for general information on China and as such an important acquisition for libraries worldwide.

While discussing Berkshire’s achievement we should also note the company’s burgeoning range of products relating to China, some of which are spin-offs from the *Encyclopedia*. This is *China: The First 5,000 Years* (ISBN 978 1 933782 20 1) is a brief history of China drawn from articles

in the main *Encyclopedia* and aimed at the school and undergraduate market. Also offshoots are a series of *Berkshire Encyclopedia of China* Handbooks. At the time of writing none of these were available, but the first, *Brand China: An Encyclopedic Handbook of Global Perceptions and Representations* (ISBN 978 1 933782 22 5), was due for release in May. Titles listed to follow included *China Sees the World*, *Internet in China* and *Education in China*. Like *This is China*, these “encyclopedic handbooks” are intended primarily to be used in teaching courses about China and should have wide appeal both to libraries and students. More for the reference shelf, and not a direct spin-off from the main encyclopedia is Berkshire’s other big China project, *The Dictionary of Chinese Biography* (ISBN 978 1 9337282 66 9). To be in three volumes and scheduled for release in 2011 this ambitious set will be the first comprehensive biographical dictionary for China in the English language. More information on it and the other publications highlighted above, plus the *Berkshire Encyclopedia of China* itself, can be found on the Berkshire Publishing web site at [www.berkshirepublishing.com](http://www.berkshirepublishing.com).

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