

Reference Sources for High School Students

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User Group: High School Students

High school students are a very important and underserved user group in public libraries. They range in age from 13 to 18 putting them in the range of young adult services. Although they make up twenty-three percent of the public libraries' typical weekly users, only eleven percent of libraries have a young adult librarian (Jacobson and Sutton 2001, 294). Besides public libraries, high school students also use their school libraries and sometimes even college or university libraries.

Reference Collections

There are many useful reference sources for high school students. I will enumerate five sources that would be good additions to any reference collection serving high school students. These sources were chosen without regard to price. I have tried to choose sources from different content areas as well as types of reference sources.

Reference Sources

Garraty, John A., and Mark C. Carnes, eds. *American National Biography*. 24 Vol. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

This is a great biographical resource for great Americans won the Dartmouth Medal for 1999. It is ethnic and gender inclusive which is not true of most traditional biographical reference sources. This is what makes it unique in its field. This would be great in any high school library collection because of its usefulness as a beginning source of research on American historical figures. It is also valuable because of its inclusion of "new findings about and interpretations of the roles of major historical figures" (Bleiler 1999, 68).

Grendler, Paul F., ed. *Encyclopedia of the Renaissance*. New York: Scribners, 1999.

This historical and cultural resource contains essays covering the time period from 1350 to the early 17th century in Europe. These essays include aspects of everyday life as well as the arts and writings of the time. This resource would be useful to high school students who want to get a more in-depth look at the Renaissance than is presented in their history books. Following each article is “a selective bibliography of primary and secondary sources for further study” (Auchter 2000, 61).

Hirsh, E.D. and others. *Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, 2d rev. ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993.

This general reference source contains all the cultural knowledge a person should have by the end of their senior year in high school. Each entry contains a definition/description and the related cultural association. It covers cultural information from the Bible to world history to technology. High school students would find this book useful because it gives them the background information needed to understand cultural references. The source is especially valuable to non-Christian students who might not have knowledge of the Bible. Also valuable is the proverbs section for students who are not native English speakers.

Masterplots Complete. Engelwood Cliffs, NJ: Salem Press, 1999. CD-ROM.

This electronic resource contains all of the entries from Masterplots and Masterplots II, plus entries from Cyclopedia of Literary Characters I and II, and World Authors II. It is easily searchable. This resource is good for high school students to use as a supplement to reading a book. It gives useful analysis of themes and characters to aid students in research for papers. Another valuable feature of the CD-ROM is the

ability to search by title, author, locale, genre, subject, and principal characters (Lucio and Wolf 2001, 373).

Reich, Warren Thomas, ed. *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*. 5 Vol. New York: Macmillan, 1995.

This valuable resource addresses ethical issues of biology such as abortion, euthanasia and birth control. It also has entries on the ethics of all major religions. This is a good resource for high school students because it will help them with writing position papers and with preparing debate team arguments.

Conclusion

These sources are by no means an exhaustive examination of reference tools for high school students, but they do provide a starting point. There are many other areas that these sources do not cover, such as foreign languages, the arts, sciences, mathematics, college preparation, and occupational counseling. Providing reference services to high school students should be a joint effort of both school and public libraries and they should communicate with each other about which sources are needed for their local students.

References

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