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Encyclopedia of Housing [Book Review]

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Encyclopedia of Housing (2nd edition)

Edited by Andrew T. Carswell

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Now in a long overdue second edition, the new *Encyclopedia of Housing* is less an overhaul than a modernization. Given the scope of housing-related developments since 1998, including both positive trends (sustainable building, urban renewal) and ruinous ones (foreclosures stemming from an unprecedented subprime mortgage crisis), few encyclopedias were in greater need of an update.

Building on the multidisciplinary framework of the first installment editor Andrew Carswell, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Housing and Consumer Economics at the University of Georgia, Athens, welcomed many of the original contributors back to revisit and refresh their articles. Elsewhere, diverse voices -- scholars from myriad disciplines, nonprofit and government professionals, private practitioners -- explicate major changes in the field. The encyclopedia now features articles on the connections between housing and crime (e.g. gated community, mortgage fraud); a greater focus on environmental issues such as air quality; and gerontology related entries which, in Carswell's words, represent "arguably the biggest change from the previous edition," indicating how profoundly Baby Boom retirements are affecting the design, provision, and availability of housing. All told, nearly 200 additional pages, 928 in total, flesh out this second edition.

The *Encyclopedia of Housing* is available in two print volumes, but many readers, perhaps a majority, will consult its electronic counterpart as reviewed here, which is one of more than 300 reference works in SAGE Knowledge, the publisher's new platform for delivering e-content. Essentially a meta-database, users interface with a frontend that allows them to search for e-content by keyword, title, author, DOI, or ISBN. Alternatively, they may browse holdings by author, title, or subject. Once an encyclopedia is called up, readers can make custom lists of entries; download articles in PDF format; export citations to major reference managers (e.g. EndNote, RefWorks, Zotero, etc.); and change the font size.

Individual essays vary in length from a few short paragraphs to longer analyses incorporating historical background, and all are circumscribed by a generous 3,000 word limit. To achieve its integrationist aim, the *Encyclopedia* eschews narrow specificity in favour of multidisciplinary essays that limn core issues in housing. Thus financial concepts like adjustable-rate mortgages appear alongside legislative and sociological ones (e.g. the Community Reinvestment Act and gentrification, respectively). What is lost in granularity is gained in wide audience appeal, and this approach better represents the housing discipline in all its complexity. Moreover, each entry concludes with a list of references that "serve less as source documentation for the entries than as suggestions for readers who want to study a subject in greater depth" (van Vliet, "Introduction to the First Edition"). Furthermore, each article is

extensively cross-referenced, allowing readers to understand how one topic (e.g. blight) is related to others (slums, urban redevelopment).

Essays are fully indexed (2,952 items in total) and can be searched internally for known keywords or more broadly by topic. Each has a DOI for citation and sharing purposes, and readers can opt to view page numbers that correspond to the encyclopedia's print version. Additionally, many essays are grouped under a Reader's Guide, a standard feature of SAGE encyclopedias that gathers essays under broad subject headings, 22 in all. Readers concerned with a particular research area, Gender and Demographics for example, can quickly locate related essays under an umbrella term rather than by combing through the encyclopedia's 268 essays.

As a more or less straight port of the print edition, the electronic *Encyclopedia of Housing* has little in the way of added features, except the searchability, ease of dissemination, and hyperlinking inherent in and expected of web-based content. Multimedia is non-existent, black and white photographs are few and far between, and tables and charts are imported directly from the print. Such supplementary content accommodates different learning styles and increasingly defines commercial encyclopedias against their competitors, namely Wikipedia. The *Encyclopedia of Housing* bests its collaboratively edited cousin on authority and depth of subject coverage alone, but Wikipedia is free while SAGE products are not. And on the subject of authority, it would be helpful if contributor names were hyperlinked to a biographical sketch indicating the author's credentials and affiliations. Such information is crucial when determining credibility or establishing the possibility of bias. It serves a pedagogical purpose, too, especially for teachers and librarians instructing students on the evaluative principles of information literacy. Unfortunately, this reviewer was unable to locate a contributor list at all, which is something that SAGE should endeavour to remedy as soon as possible.

Due to spatial limitations, the encyclopedia is oriented toward housing issues in the US only, making Elsevier's *International Encyclopedia of Housing and Home* (Smith, 2012) a better choice for international English-speaking readers. US policy makers, however, and academic programmes in real estate, urban planning, and the family and consumer sciences would be well served to upgrade their existing editions or to make room on the shelf for a new copy of the *Encyclopedia of Housing*.

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