databases associated with the Human Genome Project.

Collaboration for resource sharing through library automation between Montefiore Medical Center and Albert Einstein College of Medicine and activities at the Upjohn Pharmaceutical Library are described. Iain Milne, of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh Library, describes the use of automation at that institution and, in one cogent statement, describes the plight of many of the great historical medical libraries. "Library managers...have the difficult task of balancing the needs and limited resources of their parent body with their wider responsibilities as curators of a historic collection. . . . Although regarded as a valuable resource by readers from outside the College, many of the members who actually paid for the library made little use of its services. Those who did, used the current material, which, ironically, was cut to save money" (p. 175).

In summary, the objectives set forth by Broering in her introduction have been met. This book represents a snapshot of the state of the art at a specific time in the development of medical libraries. Some of what is described here is being overtaken by events, but much of it still lies in the future of many libraries. Future volumes of this type (probably published electronically) should deal more with topics only hinted at in this book; one would like to learn more about integration as well as connectivity between different types of systems—clinical and scholarly, for example. This is work that is still in its infancy, relatively speaking, but increasingly evident, as any review of recent Symposium on Computer Applications in Medical Care proceedings will show. One would also like to learn more about libraries as publishers of locally developed institutional files, an activity exemplified by the rapidly proliferating gophers. High-Performance Medical Libraries is strongly recommended as a reference tool for librarians; I intend to consult it frequently.

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The editors of this two-volume collection of essays are unhesitant in proclaiming the Companion Encyclopedia "the best broad survey of the development of medicine and the healing arts as understood by medical historians today" (p. 4). The last six words of this statement are crucial to understanding the nature of this work.

Medical history has undergone considerable changes the last thirty years. The physician as historian, who for many years dominated medical history societies, has given way on membership rolls and publishers' lists to the "professional" historian, the doctorate in history with an academic appointment in the humanities or social sciences.

As a result, medical history is written differently now than it was a quarter century ago. The sometimes hagiographic "great doctor," "great discovery," "great period" approach to the interpretation of medical history has largely disappeared. As the field of medical history has become more professionalized and centered in university departments beyond the medical school, it has come to have less to do with medicine and more to do with the disciplines in which its new practitioners matriculated.

There are advantages and disadvantages to this transition. On the one hand, the field of medical history has been expanded to consider the effect of social, economic, and political history on medicine and has concerned itself with the roles of groups other than physicians in the delivery of health care. The new history has also taken into consideration those upon whom medicine is practiced, incorporating into the historical chronicle gender, race, and social group, until now largely left out of the picture. On the other hand, there are significantly fewer histories of the medical specialties, or of diseases and therapeutics—traditionally the most important contribution of the scientist and practitioner (i.e., the physician-historian) to the literature of medical history.

This is all to say that the Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine is not what its title suggests it may be. It is not an encyclopedia in the ordinary sense. It is something more, and perhaps something less. The Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine is a collection of seventy-two articles grouped under seven broad conceptual themes. Part Two, for example, entitled "Body Systems," includes seven essays with titles such as "The Anatomical Tradition," "The Microscopical Tradition," and "The Physiological Tradition." The sixteen essays grouped under the rubric "Theories of Life, Health and Disease" include contributions by Vivian Nutton on humorism, Caroline Hannaway on miasmata, and Leonard Wilson on fevers. Part Four is devoted to alternative and non-western concepts of disease and medicine; and the fifteen essays on "Medicine, Ideas and Culture" range from medicine and architecture to pain and suffering.

The librarian therefore will not refer a client to the Companion Encyclopedia for a succinct biography
of Claude Bernard or a description of the geography of yellow fever. The Oxford Companion to Medicine may suffice for the former [1], and the Cambridge World History of Human Disease will admirably answer the latter [2]. If the Companion Encyclopedia eschews the "potted biographies" and "quick guides to breakthroughs" expected in more traditional medical historical reference works, it is because this work has a grander encyclopedic purpose. It is intended to be a synthesis ("an overview, a stock-taking") of a generation of historians' understanding of medical history. Most of the names I recognized on the table of contents were those of individuals in middle age or near retirement. It is almost as if this work were a fin de siècle declaration: a summa of the state of medical historical thinking by some of its finest practitioners at the very close of the century.

"The seventy-two essays speak for themselves," the editors have written, "Beyond argument they comprise the best and biggest body of expert research and interpretation in the history of medicine currently available" (p. 3). Whether there is indeed a logic that ties these essays together as a comprehensive view of medical history (as opposed to a collection of essays) is arguable. One cannot argue about the credentials of its sixty-eight contributors, however. Whatever the successes or shortcomings of the whole and its parts, the Companion Encyclopedia is as important a statement about medical historiography in our generation as it is about the history of medicine. Historians' methods and points of view change; the scholarship and value of this work will remain.

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References


This book is organized to help people refine their medical questions, then seek the answers in the sources described. General medical questions ("where should I go to find . . . ?") introduce broad categories such as food facts, dental health, diseases, and health care equipment. Each question is then answered with one or more sources and the number for a section in the next chapter where that source is described in detail.

The chapters are paired in question-and-answer fashion and cover printed sources, computerized databases, organizations, and governmental resources. Final chapters describe health centers, health professionals, clearinghouses, publishers, and related areas.

With the new Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations' standards emphasizing patient information and discharge instructions, I would anticipate that even those hospital libraries that have not provided consumer health or patient education services in the past will be requested to do so in the future. Because setting up such a collection requires a large commitment of time and resources, a reference book of this type will prove invaluable to busy hospital librarians. It will be of less value to those already having large and active collections but may provide some gems that have not been found before.

I decided to approach this book as a member of the public and noticed first that it does not give answers but places to find answers. Therefore, if I had an urgent medical question, I might find this frustrating. (In our health education library, open to the public, we get between ten and twenty questions from the public per day, and most of those people want answers, not another source to call or write.) However, for those doing general research, or just beginning their quest, this book is a good starting point. It also helps a person begin to formulate questions and narrow choices.

I admired the way that information was clarified and divided into types of sources. A persistent lay person will probably come upon many unexpected sources of information on their topic, expanding and enriching their search.

I selected several typical consumer health information questions at random and found that resources were given for all of them. I learned that starting with the index was more direct than leafing through the questions in chapter 2 ("Where should I go to find health information in printed sources?"). I would have liked more synonyms in the index. For example, "anorexia" was there but not "bulimia," "Depression" was available but not "bipolar disorder" or "manic depressive disorder." I found "birth defects" but not "congenital malformations" or "syndromes."

For some of the sources, more explanation may be needed for the lay public. For example, those not familiar with computerized databases might need more description of size, scope, and location (i.e., where to find them).