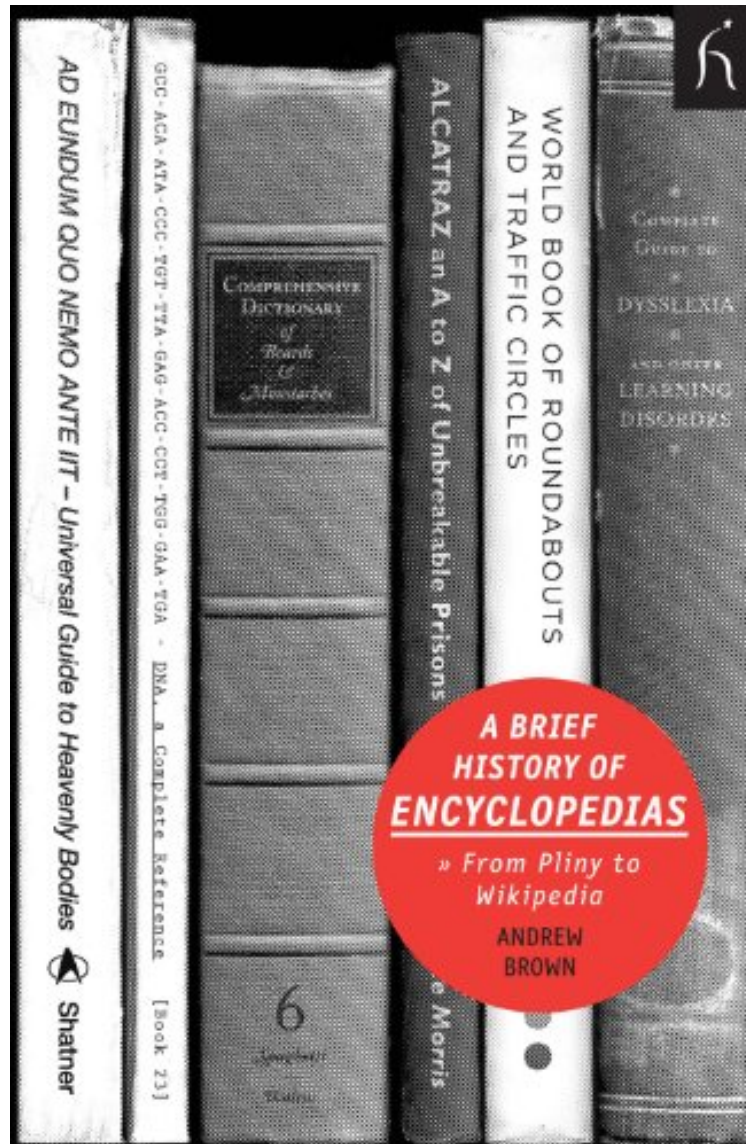


[Mobile ebook] A Brief History of Encyclopedias: From Pliny to Wikipedia (Brief Histories)

A Brief History of Encyclopedias: From Pliny to Wikipedia (Brief Histories)

Andrew Brown

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Andrew Brown : A Brief History of Encyclopedias: From Pliny to Wikipedia (Brief Histories) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Brief History of Encyclopedias: From Pliny to Wikipedia (Brief Histories):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Brief but PackedBy D. A Linzee"Brief" doesn't mean lacking in

breadth of coverage. Brown starts with the ancient Greeks (Sophocles didn't approve of the mere accumulation of facts, but Aristotle did, and invented some of the ways we continue to use to organize knowledge) and ends with Wikipedia (which is in many ways, like inclusiveness and timeliness, the ultimate encyclopedia, but also the anti-encyclopedia, because it does away with the printed book's selection and certification of those facts that were important and lasting). Brown also covers the world, writing of Islamic and Chinese encyclopedias as well as Western ones. He explores topics such as how alphabetical order became the standard organizing principle of encyclopedias, and talks about those industrious, self-improving people who read entire encyclopedias. Informative, unpretentious and entertaining.

Including topics such as Wikipedia's importance as a global phenomenon, this is a timely consideration of the roles of the guardians and editors of information throughout history. Encyclopedias have traditionally claimed to provide absolute knowledge, yet with information now among the world's most valuable commodities, this *Brief History* is a sensible deliberation on how accurate that claim can ever be. While the omissions and distortions of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia may seem easy enough to spot, those of for example the *Britannica*, the *Universalis*, or the *Brockhaus* may not be so widely known. Since the Middle Ages, rapid advancements in science have made all encyclopedias effectively obsolete virtually immediately as they are published, which begs the question: Is the encyclopedic project fundamentally flawed? Also discussing the impact online encyclopedias have had on the conundrum, this is a fascinating account of an unjustly neglected area of cultural history.

"Concise and elegant . . . Brown is witty . . . and his story . . . is full of splendid digressions." *Guardian*