

Journal Information

Journal ID (publisher-id): jgi

ISSN: 1910-7595

Publisher: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Article Information

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Publication date: December 2011

First Page: 146 Last Page: 149

Publisher Id: jgi.2011.26.10

DOI: 10.4309/jgi.2011.26.10

The International Encyclopedia of Gambling (2 vols.)

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Thompson, William N. (2010). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO. ISBN 978-1-59884-225-8. 732 pp., plus front matter and indices. US \$180.00. This book is also on the web as an e-book; visit abc-clio.com for details.

From Adam and Eve's gambling with the future of humanity until today, our human propensity to take risks and enjoy the knowledge and fruits that come from them — and the inevitable losses — appears to be a cultural universal that is with us to stay.

This comprehensive, two-volume reference work is a broad and yet detailed look at gambling within the United States and around the globe. The editor William Thompson, along with more than 30 contributors, compiled this book as an update and revision of his 2001 book, *Gambling in America: An Encyclopedia of History, Issues, and Society*. Most entries from the earlier work are updated here, while much new material has been added. Ultimately, the new work explores gambling in more than 75 countries, plus individual entries for each Canadian province and U.S. state. This work illuminates the interconnections between types of gambling and the increasingly blurred cultural and geographic boundaries of the games and the economic interests that promote them — a reflection of the increased globalization of gambling over the last decade.

The 2010 version is now two volumes instead of one, in order to accommodate the additional material. The first volume is organized into three major sections, including (1) General Topics, (2) Games, and (3) Biographies of Leading Figures in Gambling. The second volume includes the sections (4) Venues and Places, (5) Annotated Bibliography, (6) Leading Law Cases, (7) Glossary, and (8) Selected Essays on Gambling. Since the sections have no narratives that introduce them, it is sometimes difficult to know the logic behind the structure within them. For example, I was puzzled by the decision to put pieces on “Dog Racing” and “Sports Betting” into the General Topics section, and not Section 2 (Games). I also did not

understand the inclusion of Section 8 and how it was intended to relate to the rest of the book.

Tucked between the Introduction and Section 1 is a multi-page “Chronology of Gambling Events.” I found this section an enjoyable exploration of the role gambling has played throughout human history, dipping its toe into the moral ambiguities and ethical issues regarding gambling, the economic and sociological implications of gambling within communities, and the waves of regulation and deregulation of gambling activities throughout history — themes which permeate the rest of the book.

The first section, General Topics, is a hodgepodge of articles on a variety of subjects with no similar theme except perhaps their diversity. Essays in this section range from cheating schemes, to federal lottery laws, to Native American gaming, to problem gambling, to religion and gambling, and plenty more. Some additional structure would have benefited this section and helped it feel more cohesive with the rest of the book. However, the topics are not so numerous that it is difficult to scan them in the table of contents, and there appear to be adequate signposts for the reader within the index. One word of warning about this section is that it is very U.S.-centered; the “international” in the title of the book mainly refers to the gazetteer in Section 4. Even the pieces on Native American gambling in this section focus almost exclusively on tribes in the United States.

The second section is entitled “Games” and covers 18 broad types. If you are at all familiar with the subject, you know how difficult it can be to know where to draw the line between certain games, as established types develop entirely new variations on the theme and other types (or venues) merge in new and unexpected ways (e.g., the racino). An introduction to the section would have helped illuminate the decisions made (as I am sure there were some difficult ones) and provided the editor an opportunity to offer signposts to other relevant pieces throughout the two volumes. Baccarat, bingo, card games, dice games, lotteries, slot machine games, and wheel games such as roulette are among the types discussed. I enjoyed reading the histories of the games and their influence on popular culture, as well as the succinct overviews of how the games are played. As mentioned earlier, the focus is on games that currently are popular in the United States (though they may have their roots elsewhere).

Section 3 is dedicated to the lives of “leading figures” in gambling, and is yet another reason to look for the newest edition of this book. These 43 mini-biographies range in length from a couple paragraphs to several pages and describe the contributions of such figures as William Bennett, Frank Fahrenkopf, Kirk Kerkorian, Blaise Pascal, Stephen Wynn, and — rather sweetly, I thought — Cassius Marcellus Coolidge, the artist and creator of those cigar-chomping, poker-playing canines that grace the walls of countless pool halls, saloons, and man-

caves.

The bulk of the second volume is contained in Section 4, Venues and Places. It is organized roughly by continent, and the regions within each. Most of the material on gambling outside the western hemisphere was not found in the last edition. The photographs peppered throughout help give the reader more of a feel for the areas and local establishments. Most of the articles in this section are based on material from the book *International Casino Law* ([Cabot, Thompson, Tottenham, Braulich, eds., 1999](#)) and articles from *International Gaming and Wagering Business*, along with newspaper articles and promotional websites. The shortage of sources written by natives of these areas is a major opportunity lost. Finally, while Canada was given a multipage introduction before discussion of individual provinces, no comparable introduction was written for the United States. The failure to include even a couple paragraphs pointing to relevant sections elsewhere in the book (e.g., the Commission on the Review of National Policy toward Gambling in the 1970s and the National Gambling Impact Study Commission in the 1990s, described in Section 1, or some further explication of the attempts by Congress to put limits on gambling, as mentioned in the Chronology) is unfortunate.

Section 5 — toward the end of the second volume — includes an annotated bibliography, organized alphabetically by author, with overviews of more than 75 publications. Thematically, these works mostly include books on the history of gambling and publications of historical importance to the modern field of gambling studies. It should come as no surprise by now that these books almost exclusively focus on gambling in the United States, although a handful are nonspecific. Section 6 comprises short descriptions of the 30 leading law cases and case series on gambling, compiled by Professor I. Nelson Rose. These do not appear to be in any particular order. They are certainly interesting reading, and if you are in a hurry to find a particular case, you can find it in the book's index. Section 8 is the Glossary of Gambling Terms, which includes discussion of about 20 terms ranging from broad expressions such as “gambling” and “luck” to more specific jargon including “junket” and “hit.” This tiny section is all of 2½ pages; I hope to see it broadly expanded in the next edition.

Finally, Section 8 is a collection of essays on a range of topics. These are short, informal pieces mostly adapted from articles and presentations the editor published elsewhere (dating mostly from the 1990s), as well as what appears to be original writing done for this book, but with no clear author identified (one presumes the author is Thompson, but it is unclear to me how a reader would cite one of these essays). The dating problem is evident in the inclusion of the second essay, “The Family that Gambles Together,” which is about Las Vegas’ rebranding itself as a family destination and the author's predictions about why this will not work. The casual tone of these essays and their emphasis on the author's opinions on

various topics make them seem out of place in a reference book.

Despite the comprehensive nature of this work, and precisely because of it, one omission that particularly seems lacking is that of an integrated bibliography or reference list. Each individual piece, if only a few paragraphs in length, has its own list of references, which I appreciated for the easy access it provided. Yet nowhere is there a bibliography where all the reference materials are listed in one place — a surprising and frustrating omission as I went through this lengthy work. To make matters worse, the index is skeletal, being fewer than 12 pages in regular type, with no authors or separate author index provided. A “Thematic Index” is included, but a great deal of it reiterates what is found in the table of contents; what it does not reiterate would have been better included in the table of contents and/or inserted into the general index, to save the reader from having to search in a third place for what they need.

All in all, despite these shortcomings, I am happy to have reviewed this set, as it is now a permanent fixture on my bookshelf. The writing is accessible and a pleasure to read and the style is consistent throughout, despite the book having multiple authors. Thompson's ability to incorporate a variety of sources ranging from folk songs, to photographs, to entertaining anecdotes, to an abundance of useful information, makes this set a valuable addition to any library.

Reference

Cabot, A.. Thompson, W.. Tottenham, A.. Braulich, C.. , eds. (1999). *International casino law*, 3rd ed. Reno: Institute of Gambling Studies, University of Nevada, Reno.

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