

The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Writing Systems

By Florian Coulmas

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This is an encyclopedia of writing systems, scripts and orthographies of all the world's major languages, past and present. It provides both a fully illustrated description of over 400 writing systems and an account of the study of writing in many different disciplines, from anthropology to psychology.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
Covering over 400 of them, *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Writing Systems* is a vital reference resource not only for the serious scholar of writing but for anyone with a passing interest in the history of writing. Sociolinguist Florian Coulmas, editor of *The Handbook of Sociolinguistics* and associate editor of *The International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, draws on disciplines ranging from psychology to epigraphy to present a work that is both far-reaching in its scope and deep enough to be of interest to serious theorists.

The encyclopedia itself consists of articles and entries of various lengths, all laid out in a typical A-to-Z format, with copious cross-referencing providing a wealth of threads for the inveterate browser. The entries themselves range from short definitions of concepts to longer articles on more complex topics, such as morphogenesis (the idea that all writing can be traced back to a single system), orthographic reform, and dyslexia. Over 400 figures and 1,600 tables illustrate not only the world's orthographies but also such things as the Mormon alphabet, the elements comprising Mayan logograms (written signs representing whole words), and Babylonian clay tablets. All this, plus a comprehensive bibliography, makes *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Writing Systems* an indispensable reference work for scholars and a thoroughly enjoyable browse for anyone interested in human communication.

From Library Journal
Nearly 80 international scholars, the editors among them, have contributed entries in The World's Writing Systems covering all scripts officially used throughout the world as well as their historical origins, each with an extensive bibliography. Included are tables of alphabets and syllabaries as well as script samples, usually featuring transliteration, transcription, and gloss of the text. The essays are grouped by topics, but a detailed index guides the user to specific terms or languages desired. There is even a section with entries treating notation systems used for music and movement. The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Writing Systems is arranged in dictionary format without an index, but with a substantial bibliography. Coulmas's (Writing Systems of the World, Blackwell, 1989) coverage is not nearly as comprehensive as the Oxford publication. In the article on the Cree Syllabary all scripts are mentioned, but tables are not provided for Inuktitut (Inuit language) or Chipewyan. "Gothic" script is discussed with only incidental reference to the term Fraktur, for which an interesting history is provided in the Oxford work. This, however, does not mean that the Coulmas encyclopedia is not a useful reference tool. Both publications are recommended for most reference collections, but The World's Writing Systems is clearly the more technically detailed. The determining factors for purchase will be price and needs of library clientele. There is a third choice for public or school libraries with limited resources: Akira Nakanishi's Writing Systems of the World (Tuttle, 1980). This inexpensive (pap. $14.95) ready-reference tool concentrates on modern languages and their scripts, with examples from newspapers, a color map of world writing systems, an index, and a bibliography.?Edward K. Werner, St. Lucie Cty. Lib. Sys., Ft. Pierce, Fla.
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Review
"Florian Coulmas provides a coherent and sophisticated interpretation of the forms and functions of written language. And he shows how important the development of writing systems has been in the development of linguistic description." *Michael Stubbs, University of Trier*

"This book offers a thorough modern coverage of the writing systems of the world. I believe that it will quickly become a standard reference work in its field." *Henry Rogers, University of Toronto*

"What makes this encyclopedia a great whole is the synthesis of all the little fascinating things about writing systems, scripts, and orthographies, which Coulmas differentiates in clear conceptual terms...The reviewer recommends it to the specialist and the layman enthusiastically and with no reservations whatsoever." *P.G. Patel, University of Ottawa*

" A good work of this kind is an indispensible reference tool for the student or scholar of writing systems...C's encyclopedia does an excellent job of presenting hundreds of terms used in the analysis of writing systems...It does so... in prose of clarity that makes each entry a pleasure to read." *Janet S. Smith, University of California, Davis*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

John Richardson:

This The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Writing Systems book is not ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you will get by reading this book is actually information inside this reserve incredible fresh, you will get data which is getting deeper you read a lot of information you will get. This kind of The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Writing Systems without we understand teach the one who reading it become critical in imagining and analyzing. Don't become worry The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Writing Systems can bring if you are and not make your handbag space or bookshelves' turn out to be full because you can have it in your lovely laptop even cellphone. This The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Writing Systems having good arrangement in word and layout, so you will not sense uninterested in reading.

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Lashunda McCloud:

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