

First bid to catalog knowledge offers lessons today

Enlightenment was goal of original encyclopedia

By CHRISTOPHER SULLIVAN
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The story told in "Enlightening the World" would have been instructive even before the recent tempests over falsehoods in Wikipedia.

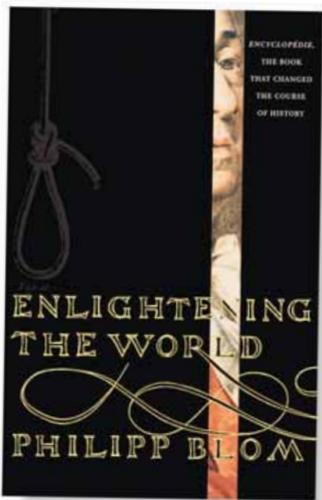
It's especially valuable now to read about the painstaking work of preparing one of the earliest forerunners of that Internet repository, the 18th-century reference masterwork that its French scholar-authors called simply, the "Encyclopedie."

Philipp Blom, a journalist, translator and historian living in Paris, portrays a time of social change and ferment that has some parallels to our own.

His engaging book is also a profile of the writers and editors who took great risks to bring together, in 28 volumes, an audacious assemblage of essential information: "all the knowledge scattered on the surface of the earth."

They lived in a time of enforced conformity to church, crown and social custom symbolized by now-clownish white wigs but also by arbitrary jailings and grotesque executions.

Nonetheless, the encyclopedists were



"Enlightening the World: Encyclopedie, the Book That Changed the Course of History" by Philipp Blom (Palgrave MacMillan, \$29.95)

determined to promote secularism, rationality and free thought. Ultimately, their goal was to enlighten.

What makes their story fascinating is that these were not ethereal savants in ivory towers but all-too-human men

(and a very few women), with families, love affairs, money problems and in some cases neuroses that threatened not just friendships but the encyclopedia project itself, as it stretched out over more than two decades.

It's easy to think of an editor as a drudge, not a hero, but Denis Diderot, who pushed the enormous enterprise forward through half his creative lifetime, emerges as the heroic protagonist of Blom's book.

Diderot was imprisoned early on, and another book of his was ordered burned.

He came to refer to himself as a "galley slave" as he struggled to complete the project. And yet the chief editor seems never to have lost his esprit. Throughout, he was a gregarious participant in Paris' smartest salons, finding time to write novels, plays and essays, always energized to keep the encyclopedia's writers writing.

Others, too, made essential contributions.

Jean d'Alembert, a temperamental mathematical genius, served as co-editor, but he drifted away as the years dragged on. Jean-Jacques Rousseau contributed some of the work's lasting ideas, and even the illustrious Voltaire accepted Diderot's commission, happily "contributing one or two bricks to your great pyramid."

Among the many others who joined the enterprise, one calls for special recognition: Louis de Jaucourt, a scholar of noble background whose specialty was medicine. Aristocrats were not supposed to work. In defending him, his mother once said that being "a professor of medicine may be ridiculous, but it is not really a vice."

Although Jaucourt lacked the wit and social ease of other encyclopedists, historians' dismissal of him is unfair, Blom says.

More than anyone, Jaucourt ensured that the beleaguered effort was completed, doggedly working 14-hour days and personally researching and writing 40,000 articles, often turning them out with style as well as authority.

Jaucourt covered subjects ranging from "anatomy" to "slavery," employing secretaries at his own expense.

For his research, Diderot regularly reported from the field, for example, visiting workshops to learn about trades, subjects previously considered beneath a general-interest reference work.

Accuracy and the trust of readers are the first priorities for creators of encyclopedias, whether in the mid-18th century or the early 21st.

Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia to which anyone can contribute, recently tightened submission rules after a

prominent journalist and newspaper publisher complained that an article falsely implicated him in the assassinations of John F. and Robert Kennedy.

Diderot was crushed to learn that the printers, fearing official displeasure, rewrote a number of articles in later volumes of the Encyclopedie, watering them down.

Riling the church or palace hierarchy did have serious consequences in 18th-century France.

Indeed, a decree accusing Diderot and the others of trying "to destroy the royal authority, to establish a spirit of independence and revolt," abruptly suspended publication of the Encyclopedie's late volumes, though the work continued, underground.

A few decades before the French Revolution that would make heads roll, Louis XV read the encyclopedists' message clearly, even though sometimes it was veiled.

For example, the entry about bees compares the busy workers with the drones, which lack stings, start their day later and "frolic around the hive without working."

Their "only usefulness" is to impregnate the queen, after which, "the workers hunt them down and kill them."

Who's being described here, insects, or aristocrats?

• Gadgets

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absorb the feature right into their hardware.

LG, for instance, will debut a 5-disc DVD player that will also feature an XM satellite radio-ready tuner.

Samsung and Pioneer Corp. will introduce mobile MP3 audio players that also play XM radio. Samsung's new Helix XM2Go player even integrates the Napster music download and subscription service, so users can bookmark songs heard on XM for online purchase from Napster.

"We've seen millions of MP3 players sold and millions of satellite radio products sold. Now we're marrying them together and will hopefully create a new market," said Chance Patterson, spokesman for XM Satellite Radio.

Portable multimedia players, which first hit the market a few years ago, are enjoying a renewed buzz this year, assured the attention by Apple Computer Inc.'s debut of a video-playing iPod and recent deals that have made TV shows available for sale over the Internet.

LG will introduce its first portable media center, the PM70, with a 4.3-inch screen and 30 gigabytes of storage, enough for 50 hours of video or 7,500 songs.

"More content availability is what's driving the demand for these things," said Tim Alessi, a product development director in



Byung Goo Kong of Korea measures the size of LG Electronics' 102-inch plasma television at the International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. The show caters to dedicated techies.

LG's consumer electronics division.

HP is promising its most comprehensive lineup of digital entertainment products yet. For 2006, the computer and printer maker will unveil seven new ultra-compact digital cameras, ranging in price from \$119 to \$299.

HP is also introducing nine high-definition TVs, including an innovative 37-inch LCD TV that can access other digital media from any computer on a home network.

Without the need for a separate device, the television will automatically connect to a

home network so users can switch from watching TV to grabbing music, photos or video any one of their networked computers.

The TV will also offer access to Real Networks' Rhapsody music subscription service, films from CinemaNow or MovieLink and HP's own Snapfish photo sharing service.

Also debuting in the "When is a TV not just a TV" category is a line of LCD sets from Humax Co. that will feature integrated DirecTV tuners. The first is a 20-inch standard model.

Digital video recorders continue their relentless march into homes as phone companies and others challenge cable and satellite TV for home viewers.

Motorola Inc. is debuting a line of DVRs that are meant to serve as home multimedia hubs, with Verizon Communications Inc. due to offer them as part of its nascent TV-over-fiber-optics-cable service.

Not only will Motorola QIP series boxes record and store TV programming, they will also let people access video, pictures and music using the coaxial cable in their homes as a networking conduit.

Such converged, networked devices were attention-getters at previous CES shows but have gained little traction with consumers.

This year, analysts and electronics makers say, promises to be different.

"In previous attempts, the technology was ready but the consumers were not," said Jan-Luc Blackborn, HP's director of digital entertainment. "Now consumers are more ready for this stuff than ever before."

• Plaid

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE C1)

wrote "Shut Up! and Listen to Yourself," a motivational book (Angel Mind, \$9.95, 72 pages).

The style is a hit no matter how it's worn, and the popularity of geeky attire may say more about the culture than shoppers' sudden fondness for argyle, some psychologists say.

"On a fashion level, it's cheap, it's funny. It's a fad," says Neil Feineman, the author of "Geek Chic" (Gingko Press, \$29.95, 157

pages), which details the trend's rise in popularity.

"But I think what it represents on a metaphorical level is much more powerful, because teens don't necessarily have to feel bad for being uncool."

Some fashion experts believe the look is empowering teens to be exactly who they are and to be different without worrying about what other people think.

So if you want to wear a T-shirt declaring your love for "X-Men," go for it.

If you just love the way your bright purple tights look with your ballet flats, sport it.

ON THE HORIZON

Event

Mount Pleasant Christian Church, 381 N. Bluff Road in Greenwood, will host a screening of the abridged version of "Beyond the Gates of Splendor" at 6:30 p.m. Jan. 11.

The films is about five young American missionaries who attempted to contact a remote tribe in the jungles of Ecuador, now known as the Waodani.

The men were killed, but the wife and young daughter of one of the men and the sister of another went to live with the tribe.

Information: www.beyondthegates-themovie.com

Classes

Mount Pleasant Christian Church, 381 N. Bluff Road, Greenwood, will offer the following classes:

- **DivorceCare** — 6:30 p.m. Jan. 18 to April 12. DivorceCare is a recovery group for separated or divorced people who want to learn how to move toward healing. Minimal fee for book.
- **Dynamic Marriage** — 6 to 8:30 p.m. Sunday to March 12; 6:30 to 9 p.m. Wednesday to March 15.

The fee for materials is \$160. Child care is available at a cost of \$50 per child, \$100 maximum per family.

A \$50 deposit is required at registration.

• **Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University** 6 to 8 p.m. Jan. 25 to April 26. Cost is \$89 per person or couple. Orientation is 11 a.m. Sunday in Room 211. Visit for more details.

Information: 881-6727 or **Fatima Retreat House,** 5353 E. 56th St. in Indianapolis, will host a Retrouvaille Weekend Jan. 20, 21 and 22.

The peer ministry program is for couples suffering pain and disillusionment in their marriage, even those already separated or divorced. It is open to couples of all faiths.

Information: 236-1586 or (800) 382-9836

Meetings

Mount Pleasant Christian Church, 381 Bluff Road in Greenwood, offers Overcomers, a weekly support/recovery group for those struggling with addiction, compulsion or other dysfunctional behavior at 7 p.m. Fridays in Room 214.

New Horizons, a weekly support group for those struggling with depression, meets at 9:30 a.m. Sundays in the conference room.

Information: 881-6727

Johnson County Ministerial Association will conduct the following meetings at 9 a.m. on the second Tuesday of each month.

- **Tuesday** — First Presbyterian Church, Franklin; program: the Rev. Peter Jensen
- **Feb. 14** — First Baptist Church, Franklin
- **March 14** — Tabernacle Christian Church, Franklin; program: Christian Help housing
- **April 18** — InterChurch Food Pantry; nominating committee appointed; program: food pantry

Send information on church events in the form of news releases, not newsletters or bulletins, to the Daily Journal by e-mail at ajones@thejournalnet.com, by mail at P.O. Box 699, Franklin, IN 46131, or by fax at 736-2766.

COLLEGE NOTES

Dean's List

Indiana Business College
Edinburgh — Lana Lewis, Felicia Whitaker, Vickie Whitaker
Franklin — Kimberly Locke
Greenwood — Shannon Stinson
Nineveh — Tamara Ankney
Morgantown — Lynda Bleivins Gordon
Trafalgar — Kimberly Jarboe

Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
Greenwood — David Bauman, Brent Covele, Scott Aikin, Jordan McClain, Alex Greve, Victoria Taylor
Franklin — Jeffrey Hash

Extracurricular activities
Wabash College
Nineveh — Matthew Vest is on the Wabash College swimming and diving team.

Millikin University
Whiteland — Amanda Coleman earned a letter in soccer.

Graduates
Indiana Business College
Edinburgh — Jill Monroe, Kimberly Hagan
Franklin — Amanda Schroeder
Indiana University
Greenwood — Jeremy Evan

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