

11-1-2008

The decline and fall of the British Empire, 1781-1997, by Piers Brendon (book review)

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Recommended Citation

McCallister, Kathleen, The decline and fall of the British Empire, 1781-1997, by Piers Brendon (book review) (2008). *Library Journal*, 133(8), 77.

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such colorful characters and settings alone, but her choice to enrich the story through contextual research gives it additional substance and perspective, which results in a book that delivers even more than just a good tale. Recommended for public libraries.—Harold Cordry, Tecumseh, KS

ECONOMICS

Crook, David. *The Wall Street Journal Complete Home Owner's Guidebook: Make the Most of Your Biggest Asset in Any Market*. Three Rivers: Crown. Dec. 2008. c.272p. bibliog. index. ISBN 978-0-307-40592-0. pap. \$14.95. BUS

Crook (editor, *Wall Street Journal Sunday; The Wall Street Journal Complete Real-Estate Investing Guidebook*) offers an up-to-the-minute guide for home owners and home buyers concerning “the decades, the lifetimes even, that we spend living in our biggest financial assets without understanding how to manage them.” The real estate market has changed dramatically in the last few years, and Crook’s aim is to question widely held beliefs about the investment benefits of home ownership and guide home buyers to think smarter about home buying in any market, especially our current one. Chapters are arranged to cover the home-buying cycle, from the first-time buyer through free and clear home ownership, and can be read individually for a look at each point in the cycle or all the way through for a complete picture of the financial issues facing home buyers. Recommended for public libraries.—Elizabeth Nelson, UOP Lib., Des Plaines, IL

Miller, Michael. *YouTube® for Business: Online Video Marketing for Any Business*. Que: Pearson. 2008. 265p. illus. index. ISBN 978-0-7897-3797-7. pap. \$24.95. BUS

In a world where nearly every computer, camera, and cell phone is equipped with video capabilities, the desire to create and share videos has grown at an unprecedented rate. As the top video hosting web site, YouTube offers a compelling, low-cost advertising alternative for companies looking to leverage this trend. Miller’s book provides marketing strategies designed to attract the massive YouTube audience without turning off its grassroots users. In five easy-to-read sections, Miller addresses the marketing and technical aspects of successful YouTube promotion of virtually any product or service. Business profiles in the form of brief case studies are dispersed throughout the book; pictures and illustrations guide the reader through the features and functionality of the YouTube interface, with advice provided for creating a marketing plan; purchasing camcorders; shooting and editing videos on an amateur, a semipro,

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and a professional level; promoting and networking within the YouTube community; and creating popular videos poised to “go viral.” This book makes no assumptions regarding marketing or computing ability and will be most appreciated by novice marketers and videographers. Although seasoned professionals may skip a few pages, they still should be able to gain valuable tips and insights. Recommended for public and academic libraries.—Judy Brink-Drescher, Dowling Coll. Lib., Oakdale, NY

HISTORY

Blitz, John H. *Moundville. Univ. of Alabama*. 2008. c.152p. illus. bibliog. ISBN 978-0-8173-5478-7. pap. \$19.95. ARCHAEOLOGICAL

Moundville was the site of a large Mississippian community situated along the Black Warrior River in present-day Alabama from approximately 1000 to 1550 C.E. Today, its remaining 29 mounds are situated on 320 acres managed by the University of Alabama. It is one of the premiere Mississippian archaeological sites in the United States. Blitz (anthropology, Univ. of Alabama; director, Moundville Archaeological Project; coauthor, with Karl G. Lorenz, *The Chatahoochee Chiefdoms*) engagingly describes for lay readers the history of archaeological excavations at the site, including descriptions of artifacts found therein. His depiction of Mississippian culture not only illuminates everyday life at Moundville but is also valuable for anyone interested in the Mississippian peoples who resided in other places, such as Etowah, Ocmulgee, and Cahokia. This beautifully illustrated guidebook is recommended for public and undergraduate libraries. Academic libraries should also consider Gregory D. Wilson’s *The Archaeology of Everyday Life at Early Moundville*.—John Burch, Campbellsville Univ. Lib., KY

☆ **Brendon, Piers. *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire, 1781–1997*. Knopf. 2008. c.816p. photogs. index. ISBN 978-0-307-26829-7. \$35. HIST**

At its height, the British Empire covered nearly a quarter of the world’s land and ruled over 400 million people. Yet as illustrated in this well-researched book by Bren-

don (Fellow of Churchill Coll., Cambridge; *The Dark Valley*), throughout much of its existence this powerful entity was suffering a slow process of decay. Tracing the history of the empire from its loss of the American Colonies to the handover of Hong Kong, he examines the contradictory nature of its principles and actions. Founded on the ideas of caretaking and eventual liberty for those colonized, the empire was all too willing to expand beyond its means and stifle attempts at independence in order to retain its own global superiority—a process that only hastened its inevitable downfall. While the scope of the subject is vast, Brendon handles the material with skill and provides a sharp and grim contrast to more positive studies of the topic. The narrative is enhanced by the inclusion of fascinating anecdotes—sometimes amusing, sometimes appalling—about the worlds of the colonies and the lives of those who ruled them. Highly recommended for academic and public libraries. (Illustrations not seen.) [See Prepub Alert, *LJ* 6/1/08.]—Kathleen McCallister, Univ. of South Carolina Lib., Columbia

Brent, Jonathan. *Inside the Stalin Archives: Discovering the New Russia*. Atlas & Co., dist. by Norton. Nov. 2008. c.352p. photogs. ISBN 978-1-9777433-3-9. \$26. HIST

Brent, Yale University Press’s executive editor and founder of the celebrated but grim “Annals of Communism” series, muses on his many visits to post-Cold War Russia dating back to 1992. The Russia he experiences is only superficially democratic; former officials of the Soviet regime control their legacies and remain mysteriously committed to institutional secrecy. Paradoxically, historians simultaneously encounter an eager unlocking of the archives of the Leninist-Stalinist era. Brent and his colleagues marvel at the sheer quantity of documents the apparatchiks preserved; even Stalin’s personal library, each serious tome heavily annotated in his hand, is given over for their inspection. But the darkness of Putin’s Russia is the ultimate prevailing tone: workaday scarcity, naked anti-Semitism, the con-

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