*New York ResourceLink.* ABC-CLIO,

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The public relations office of ABC-CLIO introduces their <cite>New York ResourceLink</cite> with a quote from a Billy Joel song--"I'm in a New York state of mind"--and a series of questions: "When a researcher requests biographies, photos, or statistics on people, places, and events linked to New York, what do you offer them? Do you wish there was an easier way to access New York-specific primary-source material than on the World Wide Web? Now you have it: ABC-CLIO Interactive's <cite>New York ResourceLink</cite> CD-ROM." <p> On one hand, these claims are excessive, for this single CD-ROM is too eclectic and too small to serve as a serious research tool for all levels of students. Yet on another level--as the song quote suggests--this product can serve as a useful introduction to New York history and can help get students in the right frame of mind. <p> On a technical level, <cite>New York ResourceLink</cite> should work with most machines (Windows 95 or later with Pentium-compatible processor running at 75MHz or faster/ Macintosh System 7.5.3 or later) and requires relatively little hard drive space (10 MB minimum, 30 MB recommended). Installation is smooth and reasonably fast, and includes the installation of two small utility programs needed to run the CD-ROM. <p> <cite>New York ResourceLink</cite> is essentially a digital encyclopedia with a heavy emphasis on images. Although it has 811 entries, almost 300 are simply photographs, some without an accompanying text entry. It should be empha-

sized that while this CD-ROM is dominated by New York City topics, it also has enough other references to make this a legitimate collection of New York state history. <p> The program begins with a list of all 811 resources available on the CD-ROM. The search engine allows you to quickly winnow your choices down through specific queries. Making the task even easier are the two additional refinements to the search engine, namely the categories of "topic" and "type." The seven "topics" are culture, economy, environment, government, law, population, and society. The nine "types" are biographies, documents, events, glossary, images, maps, organizations, quotes, and tables. <p> The additional refinements allow for quick searches. Entering "culture" for topic and "quotes" for type, for example, yielded three resources--Woody Allen on the Mafia, Edmund Love on New York City, and James Thurber on Broadway. Not a bad selection, but one would have welcomed a Dorothy Parker quote or something from the Algonquin Round Table. Yet for what the single CD-ROM offers, this search yielded quick and relatively effective results. <p> More complex searches can be dealt with by providing keywords in addition to (or in place of) the topic/type option, but these searches had limitations. Entering "government" for topic, "biographies" for type, and "reform" for a keyword resulted in 41 resources. Most of these entries were appropriate and useful, such as Frederick Douglass, Margaret Fuller, and Fiorello LaGuardia. Yet the inclusion

of Peter Stuyvesant in this category was puzzling until one saw that he was a member of the Dutch Reformed Church and that he opposed reform in the Dutch colony. The inclusion in this list of Alfonse D'Amato was simply inexplicable, for his entry did not indicate that he opposed reform in New York. Perhaps the error might be due to the imprecise nature of the request, for "reform" is rather general, but when "reformer" was entered as the keyword, the list dropped from 41 resources to eight, and Douglass, Fuller, and La-Guardia all disappeared. Although this CD-ROM advertises itself as a superior form of organization to the World Wide Web, it nonetheless suffers from some of the shortcomings of web-based search engines. <p> A more serious flaw than the search engine is the range and depth of the available resources. As a research tool, <cite>New York ResourceLink</cite> is of uneven usefulness. Nathan Hale, for example, is given a solid biographical sketch. Unfortunately, the three sources that are cited in his biographical entry are far from useful, for one is a historical encyclopedia, another is the <cite>Dictionary of American Biography</cite>, and the third is a biography of Hale published in 1914. While students can get a basic understanding of Hale, they are not given a useful platform from which to do additional research. <p> Yet if many entries are disappointing, the CD-ROM also includes a surprisingly useful selection of primary documents, ranging from the 1621 Dutch West India Company colonial charter to contemporary New York poverty statistics. Many of these primary documents involve the use of Adobe Acrobat, a separate application that is included with the CD-ROM and one that allows for several pages of text to be viewed (and printed) in a convenient format. These primary sources are very useful in doing introductory research, effectively gathering a wide range of local, state, and federal records along with important historical documents. In this respect, <cite>New York ResourceLink</cite> is clearly superior to World Wide Web research and can save students a good deal of time. <p> <cite>New York ResourceLink</cite> makes it easy to save files of both text and image on either hard drive or floppy drive, making this a useful tool for students who want to use this CD-ROM for a report or presentation, but also making it a tempting source for (and perhaps cause of) plagiarism. With the growing profusion of digital resources, student plagiarism is becoming a greater problem than ever, and even worse, many students may not even know that they are guilty of such an infraction. <p> Although <cite>New York ResourceLink</cite> is certainly no worse an offender than most encyclopedias or historical dictionaries, ABC-CLIO should make a point of including a guideline to plagiarism for students. Teachers should therefore use this CD-ROM with some caution, but with the assurance that it is indeed a far more reliable and stronger starting point for research than the World Wide Web, but not yet a replacement for a library. Primary teachers can use this to provide their students a good look at New York state. Secondary school teachers can use this CD-ROM if it is not seen as a major source in itself but as an overview of New York state history. College teachers can use this multimedia resource as a starting point for their students if they are confident that <cite>New York ResourceLink</cite> is supplemented by other general New York histories and resources, such as the <cite>The Encyclopedia of New York City</cite> (edited by Kenneth T. Jackson), and a good general library.

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