

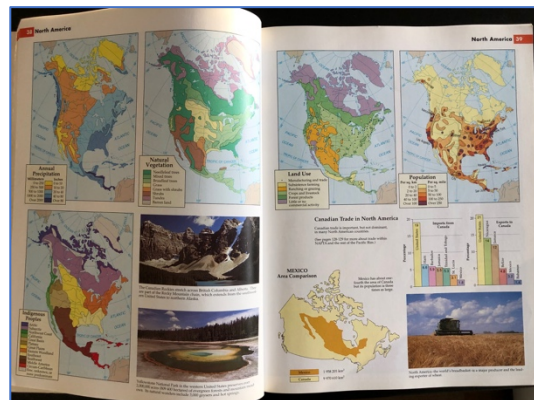
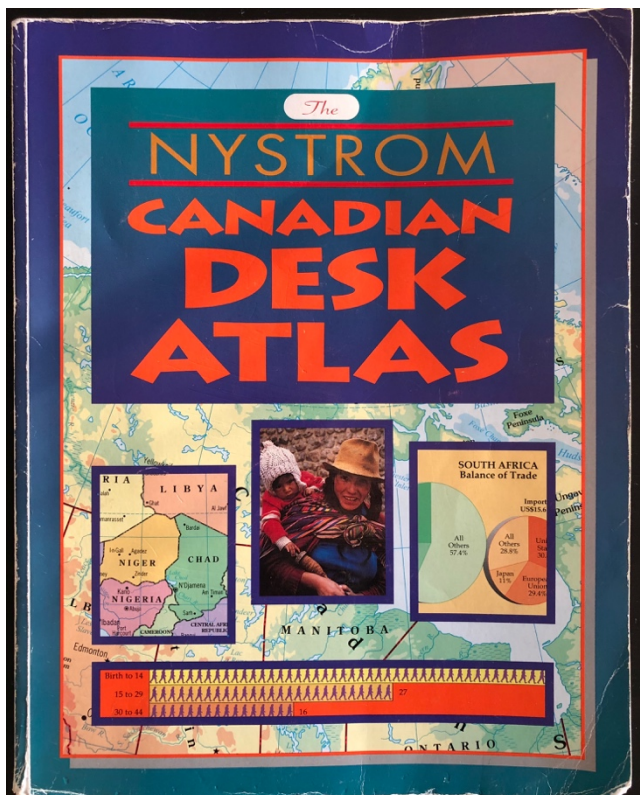
Evaluation of a Reference Work

Introduction

Atlases and other geographical sources are important reference materials because they provide information about a place in many aspects, including history, location, maps, names, and significant data. Riedling and Houston (2019) state that geography “encompasses an interdisciplinary perspective that allows the observation and analysis of anything distributed in earth space” (p. 75), making atlases an important part of the reference section of the SLLC. Although print forms of geographical references are less common in schools and classrooms, it is still important to have at least one available for learners. The SLLC at my school houses a limited reference section with about five different reference resources, one of them being the atlas that is featured in Part 1 of this report. Much of our reference section is available electronically instead. In speaking with students in the library and in my class, I found that many students don’t reach for the reference resources simply because they do not need it.

Part 1: Evaluative Review of a Significant Reference Resource

I will be evaluating the Nystrom Canadian Desk Atlas, 1995 Edition, for a Kindergarten to Grade 7 audience. The print reference section in my SLLC is quite limited and this was one of two geographical reference sources, besides another atlas.



I developed a rubric to evaluate the resource. This rubric was designed after reviewing “*Achieving Information Literacy: Standards for School Library Programs in Canada*” (Asselin, Branch, & Oberg, 2003) and “*Reference Skills for the School Librarian: Tools and Tips*” (Riedling & Houston, 2019). The rubric incorporates the following eight focus areas:

1. **Accessibility:** Where is the resource located? How can it be accessed by learners? Is the content appropriate for the diverse abilities of the intended audience? Is the resource accessible for students with diverse learning needs?
2. **Accuracy:** Is the geographical information accurate? Are the maps drawn to scale such that accurate comparisons may be distinguished between a verbal scale and a representative fraction? Is the scale appropriate for the intended audience?
3. **Authority:** Is the resource published by a reputable publisher?
4. **Currency:** Is the geographical information up-to-date and timely?
5. **Curricular Connections:** Does the resource address the learning outcomes of the BC Curriculum, including the Big Ideas, Curricular Competencies, and Content? Does the resource support the pedagogy and rationale of the BC Curriculum, including the Core Competencies?
6. **Format:** Does the resource provide information clearly and legibly? Are the illustrations and maps functional, clear, and appropriate for the intended audience? Does the resource have a visual layout that supports student learning? Is the format of the resource appropriate relative to student use and cost? Although this rubric is geared towards a print resource, similar criteria may be used for evaluating electronic resources. For example: Does the resource provide rapid and user-friendly access to information it includes? Is the layout, navigation links, motion, and sound functional, clear and suitable for the audience?
7. **Indexing:** Does the resource provide a comprehensive index (alphabetical list of all place-names that appear on the map)? Does the index provide references to the exact map and features including latitude, longitude, and grid information?
8. **Objectivity:** Is the content presented in a way that is objective, and free of passive/implicit bias? Is there any content that is excluded, emphasized or deemphasized?

Rubric for Evaluation of a Print Reference Work (Geographical Source) – Nystrom Canadian Desk Atlas

	0 - Below Standard	2 - Acceptable	4 - Exemplary
Accessibility	<p>Resource is difficult to locate or hidden from view.</p> <p>Resource may only be accessed in the library.</p> <p>Resource is accessible for a limited section of school population.</p>	<p>Resource is visible in the library.</p> <p>Resource may be access in the school building.</p> <p>Resource is accessible by several diverse groups of the learner population.</p>	<p>Resource is highlighted as part of the library collection.</p> <p>Resource is accessible from anywhere (electronic/online).</p>

Accuracy	<p>The geographical information is inaccurate.</p> <p>The maps are not drawn to scale.</p> <p>The scale is too complex or too simple for the intended audience.</p>	<p>Most of the geographical information is accurate.</p> <p>The maps are drawn to scale, but the scale may be difficult to follow for the intended audience.</p>	<p>All of the geographical information is accurate.</p> <p>The maps are drawn to scale and appropriate for the intended audience.</p>
Authority	<p>Unknown publisher with few reviews.</p>	<p>New or local publisher with few reviews.</p>	<p>Well known reputable publisher with several reviews.</p>
Currency	<p>The resource was published more than 10 years ago, and not updated.</p>	<p>The resource was published 5 to 10 years ago, and/or was updated less than 5 years ago.</p>	<p>The resource was published in the last 5 years.</p>
Curricular Connections	<p>The resource does not connect learning outcomes of the BC Curriculum.</p> <p>There is limited support of the BC Core Competencies.</p>	<p>There are some connections of the learning outcomes of the BC Curriculum.</p> <p>There is some support of the BC Core Competencies.</p>	<p>There are many connections to the learning outcomes of the BC Curriculum.</p> <p>There is a wide range of support of the BC Core Competencies.</p>
Format	<p>Information is missing and/or unclear.</p> <p>The illustrations and maps are unclear and/or too complex for the intended audience.</p> <p>The visual layout is cluttered, unclear images, and does not support student learning or diverse learning needs.</p> <p>The format is not appropriate relative to student usage and cost.</p>	<p>The illustrations and maps are mostly clear, but may be complex for the intended audience.</p> <p>The visual layout is somewhat engaging and support student learning.</p>	<p>The information is presented clearly and legibly.</p> <p>The illustrations and maps are current, functional, clear, easy to follow, and appropriate for the intended audience.</p> <p>The visual layout is engaging and supports diverse student learning needs.</p> <p>The appropriate relative to student use and cost.</p>
Indexing	<p>The resource does not provide an index.</p>	<p>The resource provides a limited index.</p>	<p>The resource provides a comprehensive index (alphabetical list of all</p>

		Index provides references to some features.	<p>placenames that appear on the map).</p> <p>Index provides references to the exact map and features including latitude, longitude, and grid information.</p>
Objectivity	<p>The content is presented with an overt bias and/or the bias negatively impacts learning.</p> <p>There is content that is excluded or deemphasized, making it inaccurate for proficient learning.</p>	<p>There may be some bias or, but it does not negatively impact learning.</p> <p>There may be content that is excluded or deemphasized, but it does not impede on learning.</p>	<p>The content is presented in a way that is objective, and free of passive/implicit bias.</p> <p>There is no content that is excluded, emphasized or deemphasized?</p>

Accessibility: Acceptable – 2pts

This resource is on the bottom shelf of two-shelf reference section. Although the resource is not hidden from view, it can be found easily when given the call number through the school OPAC system. Any students or staff can access this resource in the library and sign it out of the library.

Accuracy: Below Standard/Acceptable – 1pt

Some of the geographical information is inaccurate, which is not uncommon of a geographical resource that is more than 10 years old. This resource may be useful as a historical artifact in which students can compare past and current geography, statistics, and trends. Some of the place names are inaccurate, such as Haida Gwaii (previously known as Queen Charlotte Islands). The maps are drawn to scale but may be too complex for some learners.

Authority: Exemplary – 4pts

This resource is published by Nystrom, which is a reputable and well-known publishing company.

Currency: Below Standard – 0pt

This resource was published in 1995 and then reviewed in 1999. As a geographical resource that is more than 20 years old, some geographical information including the maps, place names, statistics, and data are outdated. According to Riedling (2019), an atlas this old “portrays enough obsolete information to be considered only for historical purposes” (p. 78).

Curricular Connections: Below Standard/Acceptable – 1pt

Although this resource supports some aspects of the BC Curriculum, the complexity of the maps and data charts is more appropriate for more advanced learners, perhaps older than elementary school. The resource does not support the BC Core Competencies.

Format and Cost: Below Standard – 0pt

The maps and graphics are complex and not engaging for young learners. The language is also complex and is suited for upper elementary or high school reading level. The font is small and uniform, making it less engaging for new/reluctant readers. There are some photos with captions for various regions. Besides the maps, there are no other illustrations. This atlas is appropriate for learners who are already familiar with the skills needed to read maps and graphs. The cost of each atlas is \$12.98 CAD. The school already owns this atlas, which means the school would not incur any cost in keeping them on the shelf. However, the resource is not being used at all (zero circulation in the past five years).

Indexing: Exemplary – 4pts

This resource includes a comprehensive index with references to the map, longitude, latitude, and grid information.

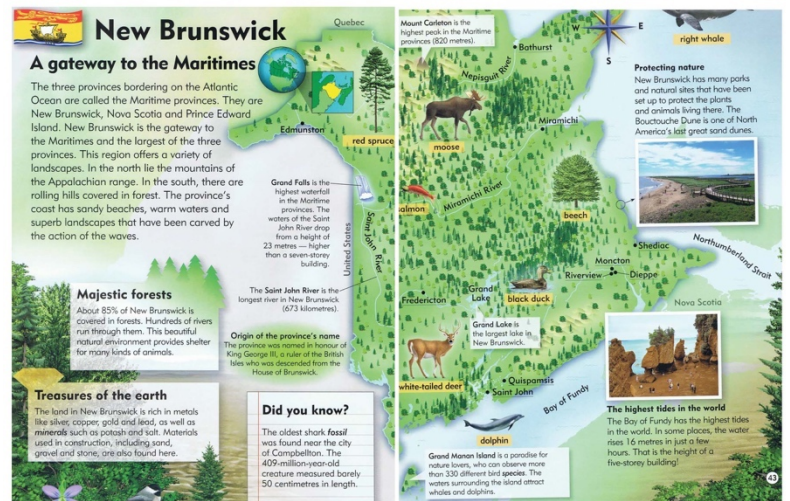
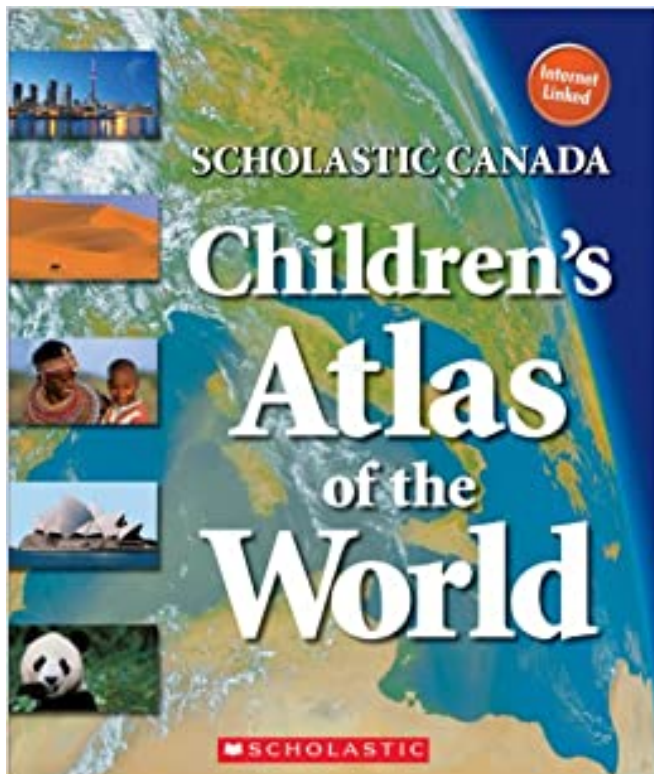
Objectivity: Below Standard/Acceptable – 1pt

This resource is lacking cultural or Indigenous perspectives. Although the atlas does not promote an overt or intentional bias, its age highlights some glaring outdated information. There are no Indigenous place names on the Canada pages. Many countries are represented with the Anglicised or colonial name rather than the cultural names.

Total Score: 13/32

Part 2: Evaluative Review of a Potential Reference Resource Replacement

The replacement resource I will be evaluating is Scholastic Canada Children's Atlas of the World, 2009 Edition, for a Kindergarten to Grade 7 audience.



Rubric for Evaluation of a Print Reference Work (Geographical Source) – Scholastic Canada Children's Atlas of the World

	0 - Below Standard	2 - Acceptable	4 - Exemplary
Accessibility	<p>Resource is difficult to locate or hidden from view.</p> <p>Resource may only be accessed in the library.</p>	<p>Resource is visible in the library.</p> <p>Resource may be accessible in the school building.</p>	<p>Resource is highlighted as part of the library collection.</p> <p>Resource is accessible from anywhere (electronic/online).</p>

	Resource is accessible for a limited section of school population.	Resource is accessible by several diverse groups of the learner population.	
Accuracy	<p>The geographical information is inaccurate.</p> <p>The maps are not drawn to scale.</p> <p>The scale is too complex or too simple for the intended audience.</p>	<p>Most of the geographical information is accurate.</p> <p>The maps are drawn to scale, but the scale may be difficult to follow for the intended audience.</p>	<p>All of the geographical information is accurate.</p> <p>The maps are drawn to scale and appropriate for the intended audience.</p>
Authority	Unknown publisher with few reviews.	New or local publisher with few reviews.	Well known reputable publisher with several reviews.
Currency	The resource was published more than 10 years ago, and not updated.	The resource was published 5 to 10 years ago, and/or was updated less than 5 years ago.	The resource was published in the last 5 years.
Curricular Connections	<p>The resource does not connect learning outcomes of the BC Curriculum.</p> <p>There is limited support of the BC Core Competencies.</p>	<p>There are some connections of the learning outcomes of the BC Curriculum.</p> <p>There is some support of the BC Core Competencies.</p>	<p>There are many connections to the learning outcomes of the BC Curriculum.</p> <p>There is a wide range of support of the BC Core Competencies.</p>
Format and Cost	<p>Information is missing and/or unclear.</p> <p>The illustrations and maps are unclear and/or too complex for the intended audience.</p> <p>The visual layout is cluttered, unclear images, and does not support student learning or diverse learning needs.</p> <p>The format is not appropriate relative to student usage and cost.</p>	<p>The illustrations and maps are mostly clear, but may be complex for the intended audience.</p> <p>The visual layout is somewhat engaging and support student learning.</p>	<p>The information is presented clearly and legibly.</p> <p>The illustrations and maps are current, functional, clear, easy to follow, and appropriate for the intended audience.</p> <p>The visual layout is engaging and supports diverse student learning needs.</p>

			The format is appropriate relative to student use and cost.
Indexing	The resource does not provide an index.	The resource provides a limited index. Index provides references to some features.	The resource provides a comprehensive index (alphabetical list of all place-names that appear on the map). Index provides references to the exact map and features including latitude, longitude, and grid information.
Objectivity	The content is presented with an overt bias and/or the bias negatively impacts learning. There is content that is excluded or deemphasized, making it inaccurate for proficient learning.	There may be some bias or, but it does not negatively impact learning. There may be content that is excluded or deemphasized, but it does not impede on learning..	The content is presented in a way that is objective, and free of passive/implicit bias. There is no content that is excluded, emphasized or deemphasized

Accessibility: Acceptable/Exemplary – 3pts

This resource would be housed in the reference section of the SLLC and be available for circulation. The resource also includes internet links so that students can access the information electronically as well.

Accuracy: Exemplary – 4pts

The information is accurate, drawn to scale, and is presented in a way that is engaging for young learners.

Authority: Exemplary – 4pts

The resource is published by a reputable and well-known publisher. This publishing company is especially known for their children's books.

Currency: Acceptable – 2 pts

This resource was published 12 years ago but was updated less than five years ago. Furthermore, the revised and updated edition features digital mapping techniques that allow for accuracy and currency for the maps. It also includes more current global topics such as climate, conservation, and the environment.

Curricular Connections: Exemplary – 4pts

This resource supports the BC Curriculum Big Ideas and Content throughout the grade levels, specifically in Social Studies (cultural studies, history, geography, Indigenous studies) and Science (outer space, natural resources and demographic/geographical changes). It also connects with the BC Core Competencies because it promotes a more holistic view of learning, where the learner integrates facets of critical thinking and positive social awareness and community.

Format and Cost: Exemplary – 4pts

The layout of this resource is simple, easy to follow, and engaging for all learners at the elementary level. It is classified as a “6 and up” level resource by Scholastic Canada. It begins with a section about “How to use this atlas”, including information about the text features and definitions of the various parts of the atlas. This would be helpful for new learners to understand how to use an atlas. Each page includes full-colour photographs with captions as well as facts about each location. The font is large enough for students to read and suitable for readers at a grade 2 to 7 level. Each atlas costs \$19.99 CAD. With the resource being accessible to a wide range of grade levels, it would be used by several teachers and students.

Indexing: Exemplary- 4pts

This resource includes two indexes, one with the names of the places shown on the maps, and another with the animals, industries, and other topics. There is also a guide to show readers how to use the index.

Objectivity: Exemplary – 4pts

This resource does not represent any overt bias, nor does it exclude any perspectives.

Total Score: 29/32

Conclusion

According to the evaluations of both resources, I would recommend that the Nystrom Canadian Desk Atlas (1995) should be replaced with the Scholastic Children’s Atlas of the World (2009). Almost each focus area of the evaluation rubric suggests that the latter is more student-friendly, current, and accurate. Although it would cost more to purchase the Scholastic atlases, it would be worth the cost given that the resource would be used for learning. Our SLLC does not have any computers or other devices available for students to access the electronic subscriptions we hold, so it would be important to have useful print resources available for learners.

References

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