



encyclopedia of world problems and human potential

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MAPPING PANDORA'S HERITAGE

Global search underway

A worldwide search is now underway for information describing any inadequately recognized world problem that could be included in the 3rd edition of the *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential*, now in preparation at the Union of International Associations. The editors are seeking insightful descriptions of the subtle problems that underlie the many highly publicized issues already documented in the volume. **Readers are requested to send photocopies, cuttings, articles, books or brochures of any kind (preferably in English) that could assist this research effort.**

The *Encyclopedia* already includes many less well-known problems, in addition to the major foci of world concern. Such classic "mega-problems" as overpopulation, nuclear war and hunger stand beside less documented issues such as shortage of firewood, uncertainty, juvenile suicide and corruption of meaning. There is an index of 75,000 items in the 2nd edition and over 49,000 cross-references.

Do problems really exist?

Well over 10,233 world problems identified by international bodies are now reported in the *Encyclopedia*. In what ways do they really exist, given the conflicting special perspectives of the 20,000 organizations which demonstrate such concern in identifying them? For one major intergovernmental agency, the Director of Political Affairs stated quite frankly that problems ceased to "exist" as soon as the shifting political priorities removed the obligation to deal with them.

For other bodies, even the attempt to document recognized problems is a fundamental error because giving attention to such "negativity" detracts from more "positive" initiatives. Many prefer to envision solutions rather than attempt to clarify the problems which the solutions are supposedly designed to resolve.

Unique approach

The editors of the *Encyclopedia* juxtapose the diverse perceptions of world problems, resulting in an original view of the entire "fabric" of our times, based on a minimum of editorial interpretation. The result is a unique document of the interrelatedness among global problems and potential resources and strategies - a sourcebook for bureaucrats and visionaries alike.

There are entries on 4,700 problems which transcend national boundaries: each entry describes, where possible, the nature of the problem, its origins and incidence, and includes a dialogue of varied political responses. An additional 5,500 problems are listed without description but are cross-referenced and indexed.

The *Encyclopedia* is the inspirational result of a monumental effort to collect and present information on the problems with which humanity perceives itself to be confronted: to clarify the conceptual challenges this effort represents to the human intellectual value system; and finally, to encourage the discovery of a new conceptual dynamic for understanding and action sufficiently complex to encompass the factions, conflicts and mindsets by which people are separated - from each other and from a promising future.

This volume has attracted an unusual amount of interest. The 2nd edition, published in 1986, is almost out of print. One Third World government, impressed with its potential utility in development, ordered 200 copies.

Human potential

The Human Potential section of the book features six sections of complementary approaches to understanding and responding to world problems. These are sections on Human Values, Human Development, Strategies, Communication, Integrative Knowledge and Innovative Techniques. The significance of each section is discussed in an editorial overview and extensive commentary. Additionally, a series of appendices provides relevant statistics and comments.

As in the World Problems section, the concern here is to list not only the commonly known approaches, but to include also those which are emerging at the present time. The 3rd edition will include (in the Communication category), a number of new listings of metaphors which can evoke positive and creative responses to problems.

In metaphoric terms, the editors view the project as an effort to map the heritage of Pandora's box, or to design a suitable mirror through which to view the Gorgon's head, or again as charging a conceptual battery through positive and negative foci.

Local area network

This 3rd edition is further strengthened by the expansion of UIA's new in-house local area computer network. Using the latest advances in hardware and text database software for decentralized applications, the system allows UIA editors to document the aggravating and alleviating relationships among world problems, the level of specificity of problems and the relationships among problems and service organizations.

An indication of the sophistication of the book's production is that the compilation of the 2nd edition received the first Printing World Award (25 June 1986) for the "*most innovative application of computers in typesetting*" specially sponsored as a Bicentenary Award by Her Majesty's Stationery Office (United Kingdom).

The Union of International Associations, founded in Brussels in 1910, is best known for its 3-volume *Yearbook of International Organizations*. It is a nongovernmental organization in consultative status with various specialized agencies of the United Nations.

The *Encyclopedia* and *Yearbook* series are published by KG Saur Verlag (Munich), reputed for its wide range of international reference books.

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