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## Review of The Undergraduate's companion to Arab writers and their web sites

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**THE UNDERGRADUATE'S COMPANION TO ARAB WRITERS AND  
THEIR WEB SITES**

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THE UNDERGRADUATE'S COMPANION TO ARAB WRITERS AND THEIR WEB SITES.  
Dona S. Straley. *Westport, Conn. and London: Libraries Unlimited, 2004. pp. xv, 185, ISBN 1-59158-118-4, \$29.95 (paper).*

With the increased interest in Middle East studies, this companion is a must for students exploring the rich heritage of fifteen centuries of literature by Arab authors. Dona Straley identified over 200 authors who wrote primarily in Arabic. The bulk of the listings are for literary authors or anonymous works, but she also included writers of historical, geographic, philosophical, and religious texts. She attempted to cite materials that are reasonably accessible in an academic environment.

To facilitate locating works by Arab authors, Straley used spelling for names used in library catalogs; that is, names appear as they are used by the Library of Congress. The Romanization of the Arabic language leads to various spellings. She offers advice for further searching by giving a brief table of equivalents such as the search equivalents "j and g (for Jamil and Gamil)."

*The Undergraduate's Companion to Arab Writers and Their Web Sites* is more than a webliography; Straley included printed sources for each author, including autobiographies and interviews, translations, biography, and criticism as well as web sites verified in August 2003. I checked the sites for Kahlil Gibran and found that the URLs were still valid, but Straley offers a word of caution about the use of web sites. Of significant value are the lists of translations providing a wonderful point of departure for study. A list of "Frequently Cited Web Sites" was very helpful to me as I prepared a subject portal on Middle East Studies at Cleveland State University. The section listing authors by nationality is very useful; she made a distinction for Pre-Islamic writers (works written before 622) and Islamic writers (works written between 622 and 1800).

I informally tested Straley's listing for Kahlil Gibran against *Google Scholar*. Although I found overlap in the search results compared to the companion's list, I had to sort through many insignificant hits online (such as quotations by Gibran) to find items Straley cites. The search for *Arabian Nights* in *Google Scholar* produced very strange results, the second of which was "Arabian nights—1001 tales of how pharmaceutical companies cater to the material needs of doctors: ..." Needless to say, I prefer the focused resources in Straley's companion.

Not surprisingly, the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* and the *Encyclopedia of African Literature* are cited frequently. These are resources that should be found where Arabic literature is studied. *Arab Writers and Their Web Sites*, a recent addition to the Undergraduate Companion Series, is a timely resource in today's world.

Straley, Middle East Studies Librarian and Associate Professor of Library Administration at the Ohio State University Libraries, provides solid "research tips" or methodology for undergraduate scholars. With a Ph.D in Arabic and Islamic Studies from the University of Edinburgh in 1977, and an M.L.S. from Indiana University in 1981, Straley provides a practical and useful resource.

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