



AT THE LIBRARY

By Julie Winkelstein
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“If I were asked to name the abiding concern of my baby boom generation, as we enter or move toward our second half-century...it would probably be a quest for the meaning of life, and the hope, and faith, that one exists.”

- Joyce Maynard, 1953-,
from *The World Almanac
and Book of Facts 2004*

At the Albany Library last week we lost all our Internet connections for a day. I had planned on using the Internet to do some research, but instead I found myself browsing through our reference section. And the book I ended up using was *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2004* - which may become my answer to the question: If you were stranded on a desert island, which book would you take with you?

The *World Almanac* is an amazing book. Maybe you already knew this - if so, you are probably wondering why I sound like I've just discovered it. But even though I had used it many times, I had never taken the time to look at all the information it contains. Just the first few pages give an idea of its breadth.

This year's almanac begins with an overview of the 2004 presidential race, including photographs and short biographies of all those democrats we read about in the

paper every day. There is also contact information for the Green, Reform, Libertarian, Constitution and Natural Law parties, and primary and caucus dates and places are listed.

Next, there is another special section, called "The Baby Boom Generation." It includes two essays about Baby Boomers - one by Wendy Wasserstein and the other by Joyce Maynard - as well as a timeline which is broken down into three categories: Top Stories, Firsts & Trends, and Arts & Sports.

Since this is just to page 14 - out of 1000 pages - I'm not going to go through the entire book. But to give you an idea of other topics covered, I'll describe a few. There's health - which includes descriptions of diseases and conditions, food label information, the nutritive value of various foods, and where to get help. Then there's a section called disasters, which has information about nuclear accidents, oil spills, explosions,

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fires and more. There's also world history; astronomy - including sun and moon rise and set times for 2004; mileage charts - Portland to Des Moines is 2505 miles; and all sorts of statistical information - in a 12-month period ending in August of 2002, Nabisco Oreos had \$524,557,312 in sales.

I decided to find out more about this book and so I went to the World Almanac website (www.worldalmanac.com) where I found a brief description of its history. According to the website, the first edition was published in 1868 by the New York World newspaper and it has since become the “bestselling U.S. reference book of all time, with more than 80 million copies sold since it was first published.” It was distributed to GIs all over the world between 1944 and 1946, and apparently oval office photographs of John F. Kennedy

and Bill Clinton show a copy of the *World Almanac* on the desk. And, in case you are considering being a contestant on Jeopardy, it is regularly cited as a source for the show.

This week's book review is from Sophie and the book is Carolyn Mackler's *The Earth, My Butt and Other Big Round Things*. Sophie says this book is about “Virginia Shreves, a little larger than life average girl whose family has its ups and downs. She still manages to show life can be good to you.” Sophie recommends this book because “it's witty and shows you don't have to be skinny to have a life.”