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Facts on File. (2010). World geography and culture online [e-resource review]

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Internet Resource

World Geography and Culture Online. Facts On File. Annual academic subscription begins at \$1,400.00 <http://www.factsonfile.com/> (reviewed in CHOICE January 2011).

[Visited Oct'10] Facts On File's World Geography and Culture Online is a new and improved version of its well-known World Atlas. It provides descriptions of more than 200 countries and US state profiles, including a Compare and Rank feature based on particular statistics. Over 1,300 general and thematic maps are included, along with a gazetteer, geography glossary, news, and other features. The main page spotlights a particular country, but others, along with US states, are available from a simple drop-down menu. From a country's page, one is presented with At-A-Glance facts including official name, area, government, date of constitution and independence, currency, GDP, religions, ethnic groups, national holidays, and weather/climate. A menu provides more detailed information categorized by Maps and Flags, Facts and Figures, Images, Geography, People and Culture, Weather and Climate, History, Government, Society, and Country News. Most of these categories provide in-depth, narrative description that ranges from 100 to over 3,000 words, depending on category and country.

In contrast, Facts and Figures offers data in a brief, chart-like format, similar to the At-A-Glance view, but with subcategories to provide extended coverage in areas such as Geography, Government, Economy, and People. In these charts, a small icon may appear next to specific data, which allows a quick comparison or ranking relative to other countries. Compare and Rank is also a stand-alone feature accessible from the home page or a country page. It allows users to quickly compare up to ten countries, or rank all countries relative to various demographic, economic, or geographic statistics (over 35 total). Images for each country vary, with a low of one for Uganda to a high of over a hundred for the US, and they usually represent various cultural/historical sites or geographical features. Images are of high quality and come from commercial stock. Data are from several Facts On File sources, including the Encyclopedia of the World's Nations and Cultures, ed. by G. T. Kurian (CH, Apr'07, 44-4218); Encyclopedia of World Geography, ed. by R. W. McColl (CH, Feb'06, 43-3156); and Encyclopedia of World History, ed. by M. E. Ackermann et al. (CH, Dec'08, 46-1844). Compared to a similar product--Routledge's Europa World Plus (CH, Oct'05, 43-0679)--World Geography and Culture Online provides briefer entries, but offers more images and greater coverage of geography, weather, and sociocultural phenomena. Europa World is written at a higher level and includes more comprehensive statistics and expanded narratives of economic affairs and political history. For general country research, though, World Geography and Culture Online is an excellent source. Summing Up: Recommended. Lower level undergraduates and general readers.

--K. P. McDonough, Northern Michigan University

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