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Dent surveys U.S.-Latin American relations from the federal period through the presidency of George W. Bush. There are more than 200 entries in dictionary format. Some entries are a paragraph or two, but many are longer. Each entry has extensive cross-references indicated by boldface type and concludes with suggested readings. A long bibliography is accompanied by a list of Internet resources. Topics range from the Monroe Doctrine (1823) to North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Good neighbor policy to Gunboat diplomacy, and include obscure treaties and individuals as well as major programs and political figures. Reference aids include a "Guide to Related Topics" and a chronology from 1794 to November 2005.

The title has the virtues and vices of a one-author reference book. A reviewer of Dent's Encyclopedia of Modern Mexico (Scarecrow, 2002) observed that "the author's prejudices do break through," and they do here as well. In the article on diplomats, Dent refers to "pin-striped plenipotentiaries." In many articles (for example, Operation Condor), quotation marks are too often used for emphasis. Some facts could have used checking, most notably the reference to the 1817-1925 presidency of James Monroe in the introduction (p.xxii), although his dates are correct in the main text.

The book would be most suited to an academic library's Latin American collection or a large public library with a strong interest in Latin America.