# Call for Articles

**Author :** Editorial Board

**Date :** June 19, 2013

In Brief: In the past, *In the Library with the Lead Pipe* has asked our readers what topics they would like to see covered. Today we share a list of the articles we dream of publishing.

In addition to asking our readers, the Editorial Board at *In the Library with the Lead Pipe* often discusses ideas for articles that we would like to read. Sometimes one of us approaches a writer we think would be a good fit, sometimes we write it ourselves, and sometimes those ideas get lost in the ether. Today we would like to share some of these ideas in their varying states of thought-out-ness in the hopes that one of you would like to pick up the gauntlet.

All of the editors agree that we want to publish articles from a diversity of voices in public, academic, special, and other libraries as well as a diversity of voices from world experience. As we wrote in our summary of our reader poll:

> While we strive to be relevant across a broad swath of librarianship, we are aware that our founders came primarily from the academic environment and this affects the topics we select. Moving forward, we hope to expand our authorship to be more inclusive of a wider diversity of issues in librarianship. Some of the areas in which we know we would like to improve include areas of librarianship such as: cataloging, special collections, archives, medical libraries, school libraries, prison libraries, international libraries, and LIS educators. (This list is not exhaustive.) We would also love to include a wider variety of voices from underrepresented and marginalized communities. And readers, if you know an awesome writer or have a suggestion on ways to diversify, please share!

## Ellie

- I was recently reading The Controversy over “Sick-lit” (general topic: YA books dealing with tough subjects and whether they encourage dangerous behavior vs. allow safe exploration) and was thinking I would love to read a Lead Pipe-style lit review on the issue.
- Prison libraries/librarians: either a “day in the life” or a “here’s how we’ve done it” (with “it” being a particular program/initiative/etc.).
- Social Justice topics in general.
- History of libraries/librarianship: digging into some current issue and describing how it relates to library history, or taking an historical issue and showing how it’s still relevant today (as I did with the Fiske Report article).

## Emily

I’m always looking for articles that challenge me and make me think deeper than I normally would. To that end I would love to have article submissions that deal with theoretical and political topics. Theoretical articles could take many different forms. One might take a theory from another discipline, unpack it for librarians, explain why we should apply it in librarianship, and outline how to do that. Or maybe an article could propose a new theory. Political topics could be those dealing with international, national, regional or local politics and how libraries fit into these themes.

Like Ellie, I would like to read more articles dealing with social justice issues, or those that have a critical social justice slant.

Other, more concrete ideas for potential articles I’d love to read include:

- Discussion of technology in public libraries
- Digital literacy programs/issues
- Social justice issues around controlled vocabularies or other cataloging/classification schemes
- Creative pieces (an epic poem?)
- Responses to current trends/happenings in the library world. E.g. respond to a book, TED talk, Pew Report, etc.

## Erin

- I don’t think libraries do succession planning well (or sometimes at all?) so I’d love to read a piece about talent-pool management, leadership grooming (specifically within an institution versus library leadership in general), strategic advancement to more challenging roles, and tips for exit/retirement-planning so we can move away from relying so heavily on institutional knowledge.
- I’d also like to read an article about piracy/illegal downloading. Who are the key players these days? How are libraries/higher ed impacted by piracy? Maybe even some (anonymous) interviews with high-frequency downloaders to get their perspectives on why they think downloading is okay: is this a culture shift? I’m interested not only in books, but music, movies, television shows, etc.
- I’d like to hear more about academic libraries that are employing students in new and unique ways, leveraging their talents to improve the library and maybe the connection between student library employment and outreach. Possibly how being employed in the library as a student provides valuable life/learning skills and how that relates to retention.

- I sometimes hear the statement that “ebooks are more environmentally friendly than print books” as an argument for why they are so popular/should be embraced. It’s not that I disagree with this, but I think it might be interesting to read an article about how many books are printed a year, how much that costs, the environmental impact and how it might be mitigated by recycling, and then a discussion about similar costs for electronic book readers (manufacturing, recycling, etc). Mostly I just want to satisfy my own curiosity, though maybe to make it more library related, maybe it would be interesting to read a discussion about how we could educate our users about electronic recycling options. Or how libraries recycle/get rid of print books and computing materials?

## Hugh

- Like Emily, I’d like to see a little more politics discussed in library literature generally and Lead Pipe specifically. I’m not really interested much in seeing another ‘libraries are so important and we need to save them’ opinion piece, but rather some critical analysis of how the politics of information and political economy affect what we do as librarians, and how we do it. This could encompass all sorts of articles from the ethics of Copyright to the practicalities of Open Government.
- I also would be happy to see something on internal politics within the profession and within workplaces.
- I’d like to see a wider pool of contributors: some more views from public libraries; librarians who aren’t from North America; and, if possible, articles from people who aren’t librarians and don’t work in libraries but have interesting things to say about and to those of us who do work in libraries.

## Brett

I’m interested in an article that describes a heuristic for determining the most widely read or influential texts in a given profession, and then applies that heuristic to librarianship. I think it’s easier to understand what I’m after by first describing attempts that have taken place in professions that are relatively similar to librarianship.

In the June 2008 issue of *Communication Monographs*, Michael Pfau makes an explicit case for developing a bibliography that could form the foundation of an advanced education in Communication. Making use of his position as editor of the *Journal of Communication*, he sent an online survey to the 55 members of its editorial board asking them “to identify classic scholarship on mass communication (up to five books, articles, or book chapters) that they think should be read by all communication PhDs, regardless of their specialty” (Pfau, p. 121). He received 35 responses: Katz and Lazarsfeld’s *Personal Influence*, published in 1955, had the most mentions, with eight. It was followed by “an edited collection by Bryant and Zillmann, *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research* (1994; seven mentions); Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, *The People’s Choice* (1948; seven mentions); Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (2003; six mentions); McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory* (2005; five mentions)” (p. 124). Three other works had four mentions each. Pfau’s conclusion: “If there is a classic canon of mass communication scholarship, it isn’t as well defined as I would have preferred” (p. 124).

In 1999, Douglas P. Lackey conducted a somewhat similar survey, though rather than asking only colleagues he worked with directly, he gathered addresses from the Philosophers’ Email Directory and sent a “questionnaire to 5,000 teachers of philosophy” asking “respondents to name the five most important books in philosophy in the twentieth century, and also the five most important articles” (Lackey, pp. 329-330). Lackey received 414 responses, which he felt represented the whole of

philosophers in North America: “Since there are about 10,000 teachers of philosophy in North America, we had replies from 4% of the entire profession. At a confidence level of 80%, the survey has an error rate of plus or minus 3%, assuming that we reached a demographically representative group. We have no reason to believe that we did not” (p. 330). Though he listed the 25 books that received the most mentions in his article about the survey, the top five stand out: Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* was named on 179 ballots and received 68 first place mentions; Heidegger’s *Being and Time* was on 134 ballots and was mentioned first 51 times; Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice* was on 131 and was first 21 times; Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was on 77 and mentioned first 24 times; and Russell and Whitehead’s *Principia Mathematica* was on 64 and mentioned first 27 times. No other book was on more than 63 ballots or mentioned first more than 16 times.

Lackey found less agreement on articles. “Many voters were hard pressed to list five, and so the total number of citations per title is down, so much so that many of the differences in ranking are statistically insignificant. Nevertheless, at the top there are statistically significant differences between ranks, and certainly one can distinguish statistically between articles at the top end from articles at the bottom” (p. 337). The top five were Quine’s “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” with 131 mentions; Russell’s “On Denoting” with 85; Godel’s “On Formally Undecidable Propositions of Principia Mathematica and Other Systems” received 40; Tarski’s “The Concept of Truth” got 39; and Sellars’s “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” got 37. No other article was mentioned more than 26 times. Lackey’s conclusion:

> No book and no article received a majority of the votes, and many listed titles received a small number of votes. I am not disheartened by this: given the spread of interests among the voters and the number of available choices, that there are pockets of agreement and convergence (on Dewey’s Experience and Nature, for example) shows something. And beyond any doubt, the survey shows that *Philosophical Investigations*, *Being and Time*, and *A Theory of Justice* are our favorite books, and that “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” and “On Denoting” are our favorite articles (p. 342).

Librarians have long relied on the idea of canons, bibliographies, and core collections. The idea that libraries might contain anything other than canonical works—that a portion of the library should be devoted to popular or ephemeral materials—is an Enlightenment innovation, though even Modern libraries were devoted almost solely to materials that received approval by institutional sources, either explicitly in the form of collection lists or implicitly in the form of positive reviews in *Library Journal* or *Publishers Weekly* (Battles, 2003; Buchsbaum, 2009; Budd, 2008; Laney, 1988; Ranganathan, 1931/2006).

Even today, librarians rely on a variety of authoritative lists for collection development; in addition to the aforementioned periodicals, which are still in print, librarians make extensive use of subscription databases such as Resources for College Libraries, a collaboration between the Association of College and Research Libraries, *Choice* magazine, and Bowker, the latter of which “has been providing libraries with the bibliographic resources they need to perform critical library processes including collection development, acquisition, and reference” for over 140 years. In addition, librarians rely on “best of” lists, both those published at the end of a year, decade, or century in mainstream publications, as well as on disciplinary best of lists like Michael Pfau’s study on mass communication and Lackey’s study on philosophy.

In most fields of study, it is not difficult to find bibliographies or Top 25 or Top 100 or intra-disciplinary surveys that are similar to the ones discussed above relating to communication and philosophy; a quick inquiry on any search engine for the “best” or “greatest” or “most influential” or “notable” or “top 100”

books in many social sciences, such as anthropology, economics, sociology, or psychology reveals multiple instances of practitioners, academics, or even amateur bibliographers or book reviewers listing their choices for the field's canon or classics.

For instance, in psychology, Christopher D. Green, a professor at York University in Toronto has an extensive website entitled "Classics in the History of Psychology" and John F. Kihlstrom, a psychology professor at the University of California-Berkeley, conducted his own "Great Books in Psychology" survey in 2005 in which he asked psychologists on three mailing lists—the Society of Experimental Psychologists, the Society for a Science of Clinical Psychology, and the Society for Personality and Social Psychology—"to contribute their own short lists of fondly remembered, perhaps life- or career-changing textbooks, read either as undergraduates or graduate students" (Kihlstrom, 2006).

Among library science's peer disciplines, it is easy to find such lists, and librarians not only study these lists for other fields, they help to create and formalize them. As Julianne Buchsbaum points out, "(t)he people who are in a position to create canons include those such as editors and publishers (who determine what makes it into print in the first place), professors (who decide what to include on academic syllabi), and librarians (who have a role in deciding what makes it into the library's collections)" (p. 2).

Ironically, librarians appear not to have made many public attempts to establish a canon for themselves. Though librarians are drawn to working with texts, and spend their professional careers organizing texts so the most relevant ones are available to researchers (and even non-researchers with casual information wants or needs), it seems odd that it is difficult to determine which texts librarians consider most relevant to their own profession. To the best of my knowledge, there have been only four noteworthy attempts in the last 40 years to identify a canon for librarianship.

It appears that the first contemporary attempt at creating a bibliography of classic or canonical LIS texts was *Landmarks of Library Literature, 1876-1976*, edited by Dianne J. Ellsworth and Norman D. Stevens (1976). In their introduction, the editors acknowledge librarianship's ambivalence toward its own literature, as well as an abundance of library anthologies that "bring together what one editor or another has felt are the best or most useful articles in one area of the field or another. So many anthologies have been published that criticism of anthologies is virtually a field in its own right." (p. 2). However, they appear to believe that no other anthology had attempted to define a canon, and seem comfortable with the idea that attempting to establish one was a worthwhile task: "As librarians committed to the preservation and use of written records we recognize that there has been much that has been written and published in our field in the past 100 years that is extremely important and significant. Surely the written word has had a major impact on the theory and practice of librarianship. This anthology is intended to identify and present those contributions that represent true landmarks for our profession" (p. 3).

Though *Landmarks* contains numerous essays by librarians who are well known (at least to library historians), and though the editors both acknowledged that "criticism of anthologies is virtually a field in its own right" and wrote that they "hope those who review and read this anthology will disagree with our selection of articles and will find glaring omissions" (p. 4), they probably were not prepared for its review by Marc Gittlesohn in the *Journal of Academic Librarianship*: "Having thus granted there is merit in some of the essays, I must hasten to add that this does not justify the compilation itself. For the life of me, I cannot figure out just why the editors put this volume together" (p. 245).

In their introduction, Ellsworth and Stevens concede that, "In many ways a bibliographic essay might have been a better approach, for space limitations have precluded our including it (sic) in this anthology many items that ought to constitute a part of such a review" (p. 3). Why they saw this as an either/or

proposition is unclear. Though space limitations are important, it seems they could have created a small section within the 520 pages of their book to include their list of librarianship's true landmarks, not just the landmarks that would fit within the confines of their page limit.

Three years later, George S. Bobinski accepted this bibliographic challenge with "Notable Books in Library Science: A Preliminary List," which was included in *Drexel Library Quarterly*'s two-part series on "The Literature of Library and Information Science." Books included in his list had to be useful or influential in "practical or theoretical ways;" "essential tools of the profession;" "historical or notable;" "brilliant scholarly works that helped contribute new knowledge or understanding;" or "reports, surveys or standards which had an obvious … impact on librarianship" (Bobinski, p. 50). He further limited his list to works that were at least ten years old at the time of his survey, to "US authors or works published in the United States," and to works written by authors who were "librarians or directly associated with libraries." He chose not to include articles, in part because the Ellsworth and Stevens anthology was still so new at the time Bobinski was conducting his research and preparing his manuscript.

Several works influenced Bobinski's decisions, including Harris and Davis, Jr.'s *American Library History: A Bibliography* (a comprehensive, but not evaluative listing of work about American library history), David Kaser's "A Century of Academic Librarianship as Reflected in Its Literature," and Donald J. Lehnus's *Milestones in Cataloging*, which uses ISI- or Google-like regression testing to measure the impact of work on cataloging literature, and also identifies the length of time after publication that that a work continues to be cited. He is also so influenced by *Bibliography of Librarianship* (1934/1970), which was compiled by Margaret Burton and Marion Vosburgh, that he includes it in the list itself. About it he writes:

> From the introduction by Arundell Esdaille, "It is curious that librarians, constantly the cause of bibliography in others, should have only thus late come by a bibliography of their own craft." Forty-five years later it still remains the first and only bibliography in the field and is still important historically. It barely qualifies for this listing since it was compiled and published in England, but one of the compilers (Vosburgh) was American. (p. 62)

After compiling his own list, Bobinski sent a letter to 60 "distinguished, retired librarians" asking them to respond with a list of "classics in the field." He thought of simply asking for their response to his list, but after deciding "independent nominations … would be more meaningful," he "provided only a few examples from (his) list as background information" (p. 63). He received responses from 24 librarians.

Bobinski's preliminary list consists of 51 titles. In addition to bibliographical information about each work, he includes a brief annotation and indicates how many of the 24 librarians he surveyed have nominated each title. The support for the books among the librarians surveyed varied considerably: there were nine mentions for *The American Public Library Building* (Wheeler & Githens, 1941) and eight for Carleton Bruns Joeckel's *Government of the American Public Library* (three tied for third most mentions, with six nominations each), but 20 out of the 51 notable titles that Bobinski included in his list were not nominated by any of the librarians surveyed. Bobinski concludes his essay with a list of the 74 titles that received nominations but did not make his list—none received more than three nominations—and a list of the librarians who responded to his request, though he keeps their list of nominations confidential. Bobinski's list, though a unique reflection of Bobinski's interests and orientation, is difficult to draw inferences from or to build upon. As Dorothy B. Lilly writes in her review of his work for *Information Processing & Management*, "The methodology is suspect, the list is hodge podge" (p. 301).

There have been two recent, though informal discussions around the idea of creating a list of classic

works in librarianship.

The first took place on the jESSE mailing list in response to a discussion thread started by Syracuse's David Lankes on May 16, 2006 and concluding 31 responses later on June 14 of that year. Soon after Lankes's original post—which includes a request for comments on topics he plans to cover in a PhD-level LIS course but does not include a list of the texts he intends to use as source material—Christopher Brown-Syed suggests that Lankes include Ranganathan and Shera in his bibliography and also asks if "Maybe a good collective project would be a 'top 100? list of the great books of LIS?" Ruth Fenske quickly writes in to support the idea of creating a top 100, and Lorna Peterson responds to the list with a suggestion that Lankes consult Bobinski and *Landmarks of Library Literature*, as well as "Dead Germans," Sydney Pierce's article for *American Libraries*. Sue Myburgh also posts in support of the idea of a top 100 list, and asks "could we be sure to include publications from authors from countries outside the US, or about non-US situations?" and in another follow-up post suggests that John Budd's work might offer a complementary alternative to Pierce. And from there the discussion draws rapidly to a close. Lankes posts once more to the mailing list, writing that he will share the bibliography he creates for his class once it is finalized, but appears never to have posted such a list, at least not on jESSE or any other publicly accessible resource.

The second more recent took place on Kathryn Greenhill's *Librarians Matter* following her post on June 11, 2011, "100 articles that every librarian should read." Greenhill, responding to a challenge issued by Claire Brooks and Constance Wiebrands to name 100 such articles, suggested approximately 40, though even she was "sure that only about a quarter of them would make it to a definitive list of 'must reads' for EVERY librarian." However, Greenhill augmented her list by creating a public Zotero group to which others could contribute, "Librarian Must Reads." As of June 11, 2013 (two years after Greenhill's original post), the group had grown to include 122 entries.

For about three years, I was sure I was going to write this article myself, but it's become clear to me in the last few months that it's not going to happen. It remains an article I still very much want to read. As a librarian, this topic interests me for two reasons:

1. For any given discipline, I want a defensible system for determining which professional and academic texts should be included in a library's collection. I hope that what I have written above might be somewhat useful as a literature review on this topic, but I have yet to come up with a rational heuristic for identifying a disciplinary canon. I would love to publish an article that describes such a system.
2. I want current and future librarians to have a touchstone literature, a set of texts we can refer to and feel fairly confident that our peers will know what we mean. I think this will make our own conversations more efficient, and I think it will also help to inspire a bit more confidence that what we're publishing for one another actually matters.

## Conclusion

If you are interested in tackling any of these subjects, please see our submission guidelines. If you have questions, contact us.

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