



Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Top Shelf Reference*, our new e-newsletter featuring all things reference. Published four times a year, *Top Shelf Reference* will bring a shot of practical, real-world reference to your inbox, with recurring features such as:

"Real-Life Reference": Nicolette Warisse Sosulski, business librarian at Portage (MI) District Library and the 2011 recipient of the [Gale Cengage Learning Award for Excellence in Business Librarianship](#) will contribute this regular feature, discussing actual reference questions and how she found the answers.

"Talking Shop with . . .": The first installment in this op-ed series has been contributed by [Booklister Dave Tyckoson](#), Associate Dean of the Henry Madden Library, California State University–Fresno. If you've got something to say on a topic relevant to reference librarians today, please consider submitting it!

"Reference Site to Remember": Hopefully, you're familiar to [Shelf Renewal's](#) "Web Crush of the Week" feature on The Booklist Reader blog, which features a website of interest to readers' advisory librarians. In similar fashion, "Reference Site to Remember" will showcase a website or blog that library staff would find useful for reference work.

We'll also be hearing from our sponsor, Gale/Cengage, on topics they are working on with their partner libraries; showcasing a featured reference review; and taking a peek at what reference librarians are all a-twitter about lately. If you have any suggestions about what you'd like us to cover—or would like to contribute a feature article—feel free to e-mail me at rvnuk@ala.org.

—[Rebecca Vnuk](#), Editor, Reference and Collection Management, *Booklist*

Talking Shop with Dave Tyckoson: The Importance of Being a Reference Librarian

by Dave Tyckoson



"Why do we still need reference librarians when we have Wikipedia/Google/Internet/[fill in the blank]?"

It's the question that we have all heard before in one variation or another. After all, we live in a world in which every individual has instant access to more information than at any previous time in human history. With any networked device, we can all find information, take classes, make purchases, listen to music, watch videos, get directions, see what our friends are doing, and find out about just about anything. In this connected

world, why do we need libraries—or reference librarians?

It's a valid, but naive, question. The popular image of the reference librarian is of someone who dispenses answers. The question assumes that what librarians do is dispense facts. Do you need to find a biography of Einstein? The dates of the Norman invasion? The distance to the closest star? The names of the seven dwarfs? You used to ask a reference librarian. But with the Internet, people no longer need to ask those questions—they can find that information themselves. So they naively make the assumption that reference librarians are no longer needed.

[READ MORE](#)

Quick Menu

[Talking Shop with Dave Tyckoson](#)

[How Do Libraries Provide Value?](#)

[Real Life Reference](#)

[Gale's Newest Primary Source Collections](#)

[Reference Site to Remember](#)

[Featured Reference Review](#)

[#twitterreference](#)



How Do Libraries Provide Value? SPONSORED CONTENT

by Frank Menchaca, Senior Vice President, Global Product Management: Gale, National Geographic Learning

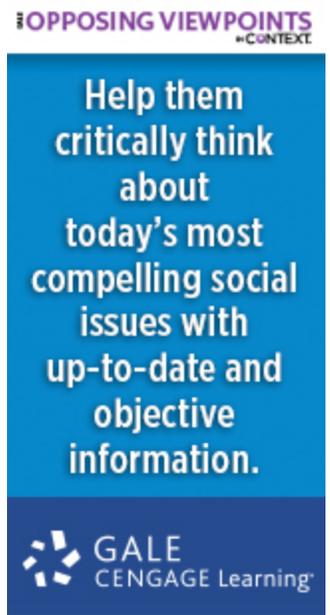


Every year I set myself the task of writing an article on a key question of strategic importance to libraries. It's a worthwhile challenge. It forces me to think deeply about a single topic, consume the related literature and research, interview customers, and try to say something useful. This year the question was a big one: How do libraries provide value?

As I visit Gale customers and study both the challenges and opportunities that libraries of all types confront, I find that the crucial ones revolve around proving the worth of library communities to the stakeholders who

provide funding.

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Real Life Reference: Good Old Books on God

by Nicolette Sosulski



Sometimes when you get a reference question, the first thing to remember is not to get whiplash. While in the middle of a team transaction with a colleague and a patron trying to download a Kindle app onto her Kindle, another patron approached the desk asking, "I need the old books about the Bible. The good writers."

GULP! WARNING, WARNING, DANGER WILL ROBINSON! When somebody refers to "the" good writers on religion or politics, I feel like I have just been asked to cross the Fire Swamp while dodging the Rodents

of Unusual Size (yes, some people are in between Scylla and Charybdis—you have your hazards, I have mine).

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Reference Site to Remember : Researching and Organizing Television History with Rerun Century

by Rebecca Vnuk



[RerunCentury](#) organizes the TV episodes available in the [Internet Archives](#). This bare-bones site sorts the episodes into guides based on show title and year of original broadcast, and directs users to favorite shows or newly discovered television gems. Videos are embedded for free viewing with no account required and no video advertising apart from any historic commercials intact within the original broadcasts. More than 170 series and 1,300 episodes are indexed, meaning this site will be a boon to casual television fans as well as students or researchers.

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*Featured Reference Review:
The Gale Encyclopedia of Science. 5th ed.*

by Maren Ostergard



This update to the 2008 revision has expanded from six to eight volumes and provides updates to more than half of the entries, in addition to 75 new entries. Each volume contains an alphabetical list of entries and an introduction. Some 2,600 signed entries, ranging in length from a few paragraphs to multiple pages, are arranged alphabetically across the eight volumes. The longer entries are typically broken down into subheadings and also include a "Resources" section for more information. The entry heading also appears on the edge of each page so that users can easily navigate the text. *See also* references appear at the end of

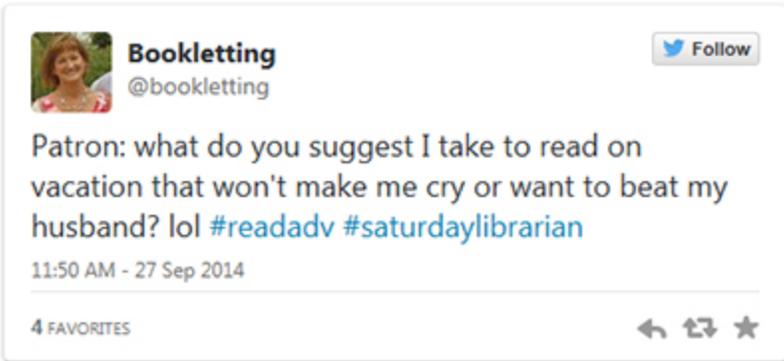
many entries, and cross-references are utilized in the text as well. Volume 8 includes a comprehensive two-level index that provides access to all entries, illustrations, tables, and individuals mentioned in the text.

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#twitterreference

by Rebecca Vnuk

Librarians rarely just sit there while out at the reference desk. Even when there's not a patron in front of them, they're often furiously typing away at something on their computer. It's likely that they're searching for the answer to a previous question, working on the latest collection report, tweaking a new public desk schedule...or perhaps they're tweeting. Let's take a peek.



Gale's Newest Primary Source Collections

1. [Smithsonian Collections Online](#)
2. [Associated Press Collections Online](#)
3. [Indigenous Peoples: North America](#)
4. [British Newspapers, Part IV: 1780-1950](#)
5. [The Independent Digital Archive, 1986-2012](#)
6. [Punch Historical Archive, 1841-1992](#)
7. [Nineteenth Century Collections Online: Children's Literature and Childhood](#)
8. [Nineteenth Century Collections Online: Mapping the World: Maps and Travel Literature](#)
9. [Nineteenth Century Collections Online: Religion, Spirituality, Reform and Society](#)
10. [Nineteenth Century Collections Online: Science,](#)



Frank Skornia

@FSkornia

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Thought phone caller was asking about canneries. Turns out he wanted to know about Keanu Reeves.

#librarylife

1:02 PM - 25 Sep 2014

2 RETWEETS 9 FAVORITES



Allison Tran

@alli_librarian

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Just answered a kid's reference question about Narnia that morphed into a discussion of Star Wars viewing order. I love #librarylife!

2:14 PM - 25 Aug 2014

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Anna M

@helgagrace

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"I learned something new today!" -- happy library patron #librarylife

12:51 PM - 30 Sep 2014

5 FAVORITES



Stephanie Chase

@acornsandnuts

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When #libraries seek to be relevant to their communities, we need to be sure we are actually doing so. Books are a large part of that.

2:27 PM - 29 Sep 2014

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[Technology and Medicine, Part II](#)

11. [The Making of Modern Law: Foreign Primary Sources, Part II](#)

12. [Chatham House Online Archive, Module 2: 1980-2008](#)

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