

This issue of *Top Shelf Reference* arrives in the midst of the frenzy of the season. It's the time of year when many religions celebrate holidays, so it's fitting that we offer our list of the "Top 10 Religion Reference Sources" for 2014; and Nicolette Sosulski explores a religion reference question in this issue's installment of "Real-Life Reference." It's also a time when many people think about giving to charity, either out of the spirit of the season or to get those end-year tax breaks in place. Send your patrons to this issue's "Reference Site to Remember," Guide Star.

And in library land at least, it's also the beginning of awards season. [The Dartmouth Medal](#), which honors reference works, will be announced next month at the [ALA Midwinter Meeting](#), and the judging committee is currently going over nominations. You can read more about the process in Dave Tyckoson's "Talking Shop" article.

Our sponsor, Gale/Cengage, rounds out the issue with a look at the data behind their primary-source collections. 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](mailto:rvnuk@ala.org).

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

## Talking Shop with Dave Tyckoson: Inside the Dartmouth Medal

by Dave Tyckoson



'Tis the season when the days are short, the lights are bright, and we stop to reflect on the year that is rapidly coming to a close. This is a time when we give help to those who need it, thank those who helped us, and celebrate our achievements over the past year. And while most of us are doing this on a personal level, it is happening at the professional level as well. This is the time of year that many of the ALA awards committees are busy making their selections of the best of 2014.

ALA has lots of committees that choose books and media for "best of" lists. Some are very well known—even outside the field of librarianship—such as the [Newbery](#) and [Caldecott](#) Medals. The Newbery and Caldecott presentations are the gold standard of book-award ceremonies: the medals are first announced at a standing-room-only program at ALA's Midwinter Meeting and promptly tweeted, broadcast, and reported across the globe; then, at ALA Annual Conference, the winners give acceptance speeches at an elaborate banquet attended by publishers, press, and hundreds of librarians. This is what awards presentations should all be like.

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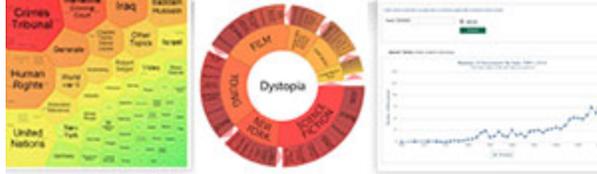
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## Furthering Digital Humanities with Primary-Source Content Sets

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by Ray Abruzzi

[Gale Digital Collections](#)' users—students, faculty, librarians, and other types of researchers—have been pleased, on the whole, with the search, retrieve, and browse paradigm that Gale, a part of Cengage Learning, and other database publishers have provided over many years, when accessing digitized primary-source archives in support of education and research goals. Electronic access to these archives has changed the very nature of scholarship and research over the course of the last decade or so.

Since making a large corpus of primary sources available through databases such as *Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO)*, *Nineteenth Century Collections Online (NCCO)*, *Sabin Americana*, and *Making of the Modern World*, there has been a persistent and growing number of requests from researchers for access to the data behind these databases. That is, casting off what some advanced researchers might see as the shackles of "search and retrieve" and instead looking at the many millions of pages of texts in these iconic resources as data or information—information that can be interrogated and analyzed by an ever-increasing set of computational tools.

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## Real-Life Reference: "Fries with That?" Librarianship

by Nicolette Sosulski



Nicolette Warisse Sosulski is the business librarian at the Portage (MI) District Library and served as a virtual librarian for Question Point for 10 years. An active RUSA member, she was the 2011 recipient of the Gale Cengage Learning Award for Excellence in Business Librarianship, and teaches a collection development course for the GSLIS program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Between her various library jobs, Nicolette fields a wide variety of reference questions, and she's happy to share her experiences with us in this new feature.

So, sometimes our work comes down to what I call "fries with that?" librarianship. My colleagues know that this is my thing: I always try to add a suggestion to any reference answer—offering at least one service, program, or collection item related to the reference request—in the way of the white-tablecloth restaurant's bringing up the lavender-tinged crème brûlée available for dessert, or your fast-food establishment's mating call, "Would you like fries with that?"

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## Reference Site to Remember: GuideStar

by Rebecca Vnuk



December is the time of year when people make charitable contributions, either out of a sense of holiday giving or the notion that they want to get it done by the end of the year for tax reasons, so it's fitting that this issue's "Reference Site to Remember" is [GuideStar.org](http://GuideStar.org). This reputable site gathers and disseminates information about every single IRS-registered 501(c)(3), providing information about each nonprofit's mission, legitimacy, impact, reputation, finances, programs, transparency, governance, and more. GuideStar is not a charity-evaluation tool or a watchdog group but rather an entirely independent and neutral source. When you've got patrons asking you for facts and figures about nonprofit organizations, GuideStar should be your first stop.

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## Featured Reference Review: Letting Go of Legacy Services: Library Case Studies

by Mary Evangeliste and Katherine Furlong



*Because we have always done it that way.* Libraries do many things for many people. We frequently add new services and collections, but rarely do we stop any prior activities. We added chat, e-mail, and IM reference but did not stop doing in-person and telephone reference. We added e-books but continued to buy print books as well. We regularly load records for e-journals but still catalog individual print titles. Given the economic climate of today's libraries, we cannot continue to do everything for everyone. At some point, we need to put a stop to an activity—and this new book from ALA Editions will help us do just that.

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## Top 10 Religion Reference Sources, 2014

by Rebecca Vnuk



Our first top 10 made up of religion reference titles encompasses subjects ranging from peace and the Buddha to the violence that often erupts from religious controversies. The titles selected were reviewed in *Booklist* between November 2012 and November 2014.

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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.



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