

TOP SHELF

REFERENCE

A BOOKLIST NEWSLETTER

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October 2018

- Notes from the Field: Post-Disaster Reference
- Top 10 Reference . . . to Circulate
- Refer Madness: Hate the Change, Love the Library
- Featured Reference Review: *Encyclopedia of Romance Fiction*



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FROM THE EDITOR



Change can be a real bummer. Even when it represents progress, and it's an undeniably positive change, having to, like, do different stuff can really bring a person down. It's hard!

And yet, I am always amazed by the pivots libraries are able to make. When I had to implement a change to, say, a circ policy, I usually started out comparing the experience with turning a cruise ship—it's big and seems unwieldy, only able to change direction by small degrees. But the reality is, libraries are more like a nimble, unsinkable kayak, able to navigate tight spaces and rough waters. We change all the time, dadgummit.

(Side note: Does anyone else have a viscerally unpleasant reaction to the phrase "The only constant is change"? No? Just me?)

This issue of *Top Shelf Reference* is all about responding to change. First, an old colleague of mine shares how she responded to a local disaster with sympathy and good reference skills. Chad Comello shares some thoughts about patrons' responses to technological shifts. A new top 10 list reflects the changing state of the reference collection (i.e., it is mostly circulating now), and the featured reference review might change your outlook on a popular art form.

As the leaves change (see what I did there?), I hope you'll share ways your library has handled change. The next issue of *Top Shelf Reference* is all about e-reference, and I'd love to hear from folks about innovative ways they are using digital resources. Drop me a line at smaguire@ala.org.

And don't change a thing: you're perfect.

—Susan Maguire

Senior Editor, Collection Development and Library Outreach, *Booklist*

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[@Booklist_Susan](https://twitter.com/Booklist_Susan)

**Don't miss Booklist's
annual Year-in-
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The advertisement features a central image of the 'Booklist' Year-in-Review 2017 issue, which has a blue cover with stars and the text 'Starred Reviews 2017 by Susan M. Maguire'. The background is light blue with scattered stars.



Notes from the Field: Post-Disaster Reference

Susan Maguire

Reports of massive flooding across the South got me thinking about the ways libraries can help in a disaster. Once the immediate danger has passed, patrons flock to the library to charge their phones, check in on social media, or just to sit somewhere warm, dry, and friendly. But what about after that? How can reference librarians use their knowledge to help their communities recover from disasters, natural and otherwise? I spoke to Elizabeth Fraser, head of reference at the Kanawha County Public Library (WV) about a local environmental crisis and how, in the aftermath, she used her powers for good.

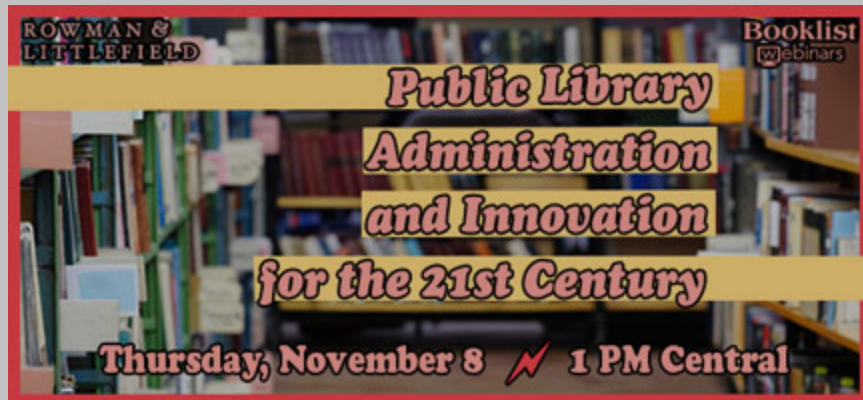
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Top 10 Reference . . . to Circulate

Susan Maguire

Lots of libraries are repurposing reference shelves to meet other needs. But less space for a reference collection does not mean you need fewer reference books. Here is a selection of great reference books that will do well in your circulating collection. [read more→](#)



Refer Madness: Hate the Change, Love the Library

Chad Comello

On the one hand, constant change is the new normal with technology, in libraries and the world at large. The newer and shinier (if not always better) version of whatever you're using seems ever around the corner. Libraries can try as much as possible to prepare patrons, but at some point, the base expectation for technical competence will rise, and everyone will have to adapt. [read more→](#)



Featured Reference Review: *Encyclopedia of Romance Fiction*

Our September 15 issue featured a spotlight on romance—but what does that have to do with reference? Well, romance publishing is changing, largely in response to new ways that readers engage with romance. To help you understand the current romance landscape, take a look at the *Encyclopedia of Romance Fiction*, which covers not just tropes and classics but also looks at feminism and gender and technology. Plus, the cover is great. [read more](#)→

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