

Candida Höfer: Libraries, essay by Umberto Eco.

2005. Munich: Chirmer/Mosel, TR659.H64 2005 – Architecture Landscape & Design

This book, save for the introduction, contains very little writing. It is a collection of Höfer's beautiful photographs of libraries around the world, including Spain's Escorial, New York's Whitney Museum, Rome's Villa Medici, the Hamburg University library, the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and many others. We are reminded not to ignore the buildings that are our libraries, as they can be as big a part of why and how people use libraries as anything else. Höfer's perception of library spaces appears to be one of simple power and quiet awe. One can't help but imagine these places being filled with people seeking knowledge and entertainment, energizing them with movement and thought. Thinking about the spaces where we work and learn, as well as the people and content, is important; architecture can have a strong emotional impact that can change the way we think.

How Reading Changed My Life, by Anna Quindlen.

1998. New York: Ballantine Pub. Group, PS3567.U36 Z468 1998X – Robarts

"There was waking, and there was sleeping. And then there were books, a kind of parallel universe in which anything might happen and frequently did, a universe in which I might be a newcomer but never really a stranger. My real, true world." In this book, Quindlen expounds on her lifetime of experience with books and on the ways in which reading shaped her life and personality. She the avid reader and reminds us that reading is much more than just a source of knowledge and an escape. The reviews of this book show that Quindlen has captured a feeling shared by many book lovers, providing insight into the mind of the a reader. For future librarians, this insight is invaluable and helpful to keep in mind if the stresses of librarianship put you in a rut: remembering why people read and use libraries can be very inspiring.

Seen Reading, by Julie Wilson.

2012. Calgary: Freehand Books. PS8645.I469 S44 2012 – University College

Based on the eponymous blog, *Seen Reading* captures the seemingly insignificant private moments on Toronto's public transit. Wilson collects the sightings of people reading on the subway, streetcar, and bus – she notes what the reader looked like, what they were wearing, and what they were reading. She then crafts a very short story, many just a few sentences long, based on her ideas and feelings about this reader and their book. These micro-fictions are sometimes bitter, often whimsical, glimpses into the tiny world, which Wilson created based on a fleeting encounter. We see what the act of observing reading on the subway inspired her to create. It's a very different way to explore how reading and books can connect us as part of a community.

The Uncommon Reader, by Alan Bennett. 2007. London: Faber and Faber Ltd. & Profile Books Ltd.

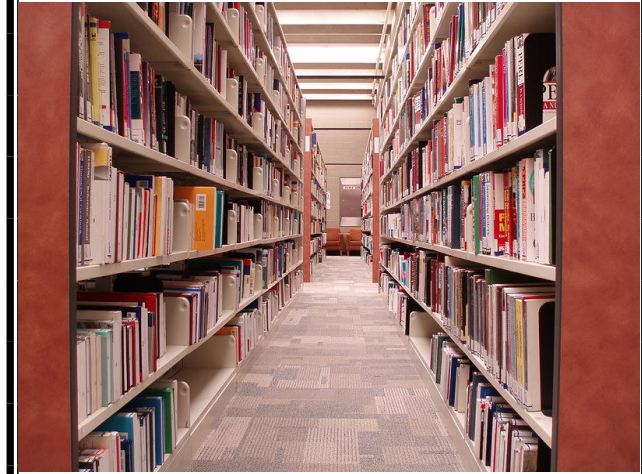
PR6052.E526 U63 2007 – Robarts and others

The titular character of this novel is none other than Her Majesty the Queen, whose foray into a bookmobile is entirely the fault of her unruly corgis. Of course, not to come across as uninterested, she borrows a book and is quickly lost in the world of leisure reading. As she devours story after story, she begins to neglect her duties and really contemplate and question the way of the world and the monarchy. Of course, her newfound insight doesn't sit well with her advisors or the Prime Minister. As much as this novel is delightful, irreverent, and absurd, it is also an examination of the power of reading to open people's minds. The bookmobile, and libraries in general, act as the removal of a blindfold, with books allowing people to open their eyes to the ideas they had never encountered before.

Created by Kate Restivo 2012

READING SUGGESTIONS

FI 2155H THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN THE COMMUNITY



What better way to learn about the role the public library plays in the community than by hearing from the people who use them? Here is a list of books written by and about lovers of books, reading, and libraries!

The Jane Austen Book Club, by Karen Joy Fowler. 2004. New York: Putnam.

PS3556.O844 J36 2004X – Robarts and others

A group of women (and one man) come together to read and discuss the novels of Jane Austen. The power of stories is pronounced in this book, and as the characters discuss Austen's storytelling, their own stories about life and love come out through interesting parallels. Each character is very different, and while they are bound together by a mutual love of Austen, their opinions are sometimes in contention. This novel explores the way we reach out to books and stories as an escape or a lifeboat – they can be a healing force in our lives, and allow us to connect to others who can support us. The way each character reads Austen shows how differently we interpret the same book, and how the book acts as a magnet to bring us together. This novel was made into a movie by the same name, which is available in the UofT Media Commons: VideoDVD 757252.

Library: An Unquiet History, by Matthew Battles.

2003. New York: W. W. Norton, 027.009 B336L – Faculty of Information and others

An alternative to academic writings tracing the history of libraries, Battles' book reads like a novel that explains the story of our compulsion to collect knowledge, and libraries as entities in and of themselves. Their history, as the title says, was not uneventful; "There is no library that does not ultimately disappear", in ways both silent and bloody. As impassioned as the argument for and against their existence, the battle for dictating the library's contents continues to rage today. Battles also delves into bookbinding, cataloguing, and of course, librarians, the keepers of the library. An informal and highly readable book, *Library* entertains as well as teaches, and brings us into the mind of at least one library lover. It is clear from his prose that Battles values knowledge and learning, and with this book, he gets to pass both the knowledge and the love of it on to us readers.

The Library at Night, by Alberto Manguel.

2006. Toronto: A.A. Knopf Canada. 027 M277L – Faculty of Information

What is a library? What does it mean? Why is it? These are the questions tackled in *The Library at Night*. With fluid prose, Manguel tracks the history of libraries through a philosophical lens, pulling from meticulous research as well as experience with his own personal library, thousands of books large. Each chapter reads as its own story, an exploration of libraries from many different perspectives: Library as Myth, as Order, as Mind, and more. Humanity's many relationships with libraries, reading, and knowledge are laid out poignantly and thoughtfully. This book is a wonderful alternative for the student who is tired of reading academic summaries of the history of libraries, and instead wants to read about the emotional and philosophical ramifications of the collection of books and knowledge.

Library Wars, I: Love & War, by Kiïro Yumi.

2010. San Francisco, CA: Viz Media, GN F YUM v. 1 – UofT Schools (access restricted to UofT Schools staff and students)

Japan, in the not-so-distant future. The Japanese government has passed the "Media Betterment Act," giving them the right to censor and destroy all "objectionable" material. In order to defend their collections, libraries team up with local governments and create the Library Defense Force (LDF). This manga series follows Iku Kusahara as she fulfills her dream to become an LDF agent and protect the freedom of information. The story was inspired by the *Statement on Intellectual Freedom in Libraries* from the Japan Library Association (JLA), and the *Freedom of Library Law* from the manga closely resembles the JLA *Statement*. This series presents a belief in intellectual freedom, and that in libraries as places where this belief is upheld. It's an entertaining battle between the forces of censorship and the heroes of free speech and free information!

Reader's Block, by David Markson. 1996. Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press.

PS3563.A649 R43 1996X – Robarts

Reader's Block is an experimental meta-novel that follows the struggles of Reader, the story's narrator and an author, as he attempts to write Protagonist, the main character in his new book. As he tries to create a personality and a world for Protagonist, Reader keeps getting distracted by all he has read before. This book reads like a compendium of quotes, allusions, and stories about authors and books encountered in Reader's life. It is emotional and often depressing. Reader's preoccupation with authors' hardships and their suffering culminations in the compilation of the list of authors who have committed suicide. A less inspiring view of reading than the other books in this guide, yet an interesting take on the way we consolidate all of the information we take in every day and attempt to place it into some sort of narrative. Reading changes us; these bits we take in become part of our own stories.

Running the Books: The Adventures of an Accidental Prison Librarian, by Avi Steinberg. 2010. New York: Nan A. Talese

027.665 S919R – Faculty of Information

Avi Steinberg graduated from Harvard, and watched his peers do well in the world, while he wrote obituaries freelance. To break the monotony, he took a job as a prison librarian. In this book, he recounts the story of how he landed a job in a prison and how he interacted with the inmates to whom he recommended books. It is funny and heartwarming, dark and very honest. Steinberg is insightful, pulling understanding and wisdom from his relationships with inmates. This book shows students a type of library not usually introduced at a faculty of information. There are clear differences between a prison library and a public one, but many of the challenges are the same, e.g., allowing access to information under certain administrative and legal restrictions and providing readers' advisory services to a particular community. Some lessons Steinberg learned about library services to inmates can be put to use in any library.