

Using Rare Books to Inspire Learning — Part 1: Anthropology - Diaries

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Editor's Note: We know you will all enjoy **Gene's** list of great books, and we are pleased to publish the entire list in **Against the Grain**. **Gene** has been very thorough and the list quite extensive, so we will be publishing it in two parts. Please be sure to watch for **Part 2** in an upcoming issue. — **KS**

Numerous lists of great books have been prepared, and this list contains many of the same titles, but differs in significant respects. It includes subjects that have generally been omitted from series of great books: anthropology, art history, architecture, art, book arts, correspondence, essays, exploration, geography, geology, inventions, law, sociology, speeches, and sports. It also includes shorter works that represent a turning point in the understanding of a subject.

I have included first-person accounts of major discoveries, explorations, systematic observations made possible by new instruments, sound analyses, verifiable experiments, and methodologies created for more specialized fields of knowledge. Each title set a new standard for scholarship and excellence, created a new scholarly discipline, or set a new course for the study of a subject. In my opinion, the approaches used by these authors are the ones most likely to continue to provide the best basis for adding knowledge.

Even when the information they contain has been largely superseded, these titles represent the best thinking that had been done on their subjects at the time of publication. They provide models for how to try to deal with an entire field of knowledge and how to go about solving problems. They are most worth reading to learn how major problems were finally solved.

I have had to omit many famous histories and works of literature to be able to focus on the ones that I considered most worth acquiring. I have preferred well established principles to theories. I have nearly always omitted titles by living or recently deceased authors.

In some cases, better editions than the first have been subsequently published, and these editions and translations are also needed. In some cases, such as the first printing of the Columbus letter or the *Gutenberg Bible*, a facsimile or later edition will nearly always have to suffice because of their extreme rarity. One first edition of a **Shakespeare** play could substitute for the *First Folio*. Regardless, every library should have as many first editions of key works as it can acquire.

To make more facsimiles and translations widely available of standard works is also a publishing opportunity. A surprising number of these titles are out of print, and some have never been fully translated into English.

As more first editions are becoming available online, what is the point of having copies

that are too valuable to be handled? The point is to inspire similar accomplishments. A first edition can be as inspiring as an original work of art no matter how many copies exist. It is to make readers wonder why these books are important, what it took to create them, why they have been so influential, and why so many of them still need to be read.

For many titles and dates, I have relied on **Robert B. Downs' Famous Books: Ancient and Medieval** (1964) and on his *Molders of the Modern Mind: 111 Books that Shaped Western Civilization* (1961). His summaries are a reliable introduction to the most influential books in Western Civilization, and they provide an excellent basis to set priorities for reading. **Dr. Lawrence Simms** corrected many of my titles and translations.

Anthropology

Vico's Principi di una Scienza Nuova Intorno alla Natura delle Nazioni (1725 [Principles of the New Science Concerning the Common Nature of Nations]) — the initial basis for anthropology as a science

Mackenzie's Voyages from Montreal on the River St. Laurence Through the Continent of North America, to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans in the Years 1789 and 1793 (1801) — comprehensive summaries of the customs of the major linguistic stocks encountered

Kenyatta's Facing Mount Kenya: the Tribal Life of the Gikuyu (1938) — daily life as lived by someone who later became an anthropologist and led his nation

Kroeber's Anthropology: Race, Language, Psychology, Prehistory (2nd ed.; 1948) — coherent summary of current knowledge on the goals, achievements, and potential of anthropology by one of the leading contributors to the field

Ford and Beach, Patterns of Sexual Behavior (1953) — an exemplary cross-cultural analysis of the sexual customs of 190 societies

Archaeology

Schliemann's Trojanische Altertümer (1874) — established a factual basis for the existence of the Mycenaean Civilization and a historical basis for **Homer's Iliad**, greatly stimulating further excavations

Curtius and Adler's Olympia: die Ergebnisse der von dem Deutschen Reich Veranlasseten Ausgrabung, im Auftrage des Königlich Preussischen Ministers der Geistlicher, Unterrichts- und Medicinal-Angelegenheiten (Olympia: ; 1890-1897; 10 vols. [5 vols. text; 4 vols. plates; atlas]) — a model for the complete excavation of a site and the complete publication of the results

Carter's Tomb of Tut-ankh-Amen: Discovered by the late Earl of Carnarvon and Howard Carter (1927-1933; 3 vols.) — exemplary

patience and techniques were used to recover everything possible from the only intact tomb of an ancient Egyptian monarch

Lanciani's Forma Urbis Romae (atlas; 1893-1901) — a comprehensive and accurate visual summary of the plans of all buildings known to have existed in ancient Rome located precisely with reference to existing streets

Art History

Winckelmann's Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums (1764 [History of Ancient Art]) the first systematic study of any aspect of art history and a model of scholarship, perceptive analysis, and descriptive writing

Smith's Sculptures of the Parthenon (1910) — folio with high-resolution images of some of the finest Greek sculpture and reconstructions

De Tolnay's Corpus dei Disegni di Michelangelo (1975-1980; 4 vols. [Complete Drawings by Michelangelo]) — facsimiles of all of Michelangelo's drawings (verso and recto full-sized and in color) making comparisons possible that previously could not be made

Architectural History

Stuart and Revett's Antiquities of Athens (1762-1794) — set a new standard for measured drawings of historic buildings and sculpture

Piranesi's (F.) Raccolta de' Tempj Antichi, 2 (1790 [Collection of Ancient Temples]) His measured drawings of the Pantheon set another new standard for comprehensive and accurate measured drawings of a single building.

Letarouilly's Edifices de Rome Moderne, ou, Recueil des Palais, Maisons, Eglises, Couvents, et Autres Monuments Publics et Particuliers les Plus Remarquables de la Ville de Rome (1840-1857 — 4 vols. [Modern Buildings of Rome or Collection of Palaces, Houses, Churches, Convents, and Other Public Monuments and Particularly the Most Remarkable in Rome])

Morse, Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings (1885) — a comprehensive and well illustrated account of Japanese domestic architecture without Western influence and that influence Western architecture

Middleton's Remains of Ancient Rome (1892) — set a precedent for including the use of materials and methods of construction in architecture

Kimball's Domestic Architecture of the American Colonies and of the Early Republic (1922) — model for the use of primary sources for design and construction

Dinsmoor's Architecture of Ancient Greece (1950) — comprehensive account of primary

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and secondary sources for a crucial period by a major archaeologist

Van Nice's *Santa Sophia in Istanbul: an Architectural Survey* (1966-1987) — set another new standard for accuracy and completeness for recording the architecture of a major building

Architecture

Vitruvius' De Architectura (1483-1490; written c. 25 BC [On Architecture; often entitled, Ten Books of Architecture]) — the earliest surviving architecture book and the architecture book most often translated and reprinted

Palladio's Quattro Libri dell'Architettura (1570 [Four Books of Architecture]) — the designs that most influenced subsequent architecture

Adam and Adams' Works in Architecture of Robert & James Adam (1778) — one of the most influential styles ever created with a detailed discussion of its characteristics

Ledoux's L'Architecture Considerée sous le Rapport de L'Art des Moeurs et de la Legislation: Tome Premier (1804 [Architecture Considered Appropriate for the Art of the Times and Laws: Volume One]) — the first part of a proposal for the adoption of an architectural style that was more compact and less ornamented, a proposal that had little impact at the time, but that provided principles and designs for the American and German Greek Revivals.

Schinkel's Sammlung Architektonischer Entwürfe (1829-1835 [Collection of Architectural Designs]) — some of the finest and most influential designs produced during the Greek Revival through the architect and artist's own drawings.

McKim, Mead, and White's Monograph of the Works of McKim, Mead & White, 1879-1915 (1914-1915) — 4 vols.; model publication on the work of the most successful architectural firm in the World during its existence

Wright's Ausgeführte Bauten (1910 [Executed Buildings; "Wasmuth Portfolio"]) — the lavishly produced portfolio with plans, elevations, and perspectives of Wright's early architectural designs

Astronomy

Copernicus' De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium (1543 [On Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres]) — proved that the sun was the center of the presumed universe

Galileo's Sidereus Nuncius... (1610 [Stary Messenger]) — first major discoveries using a telescope for astronomy

Newton's Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica (1687 [Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy]) — demonstrated mathematically that gravity could keep the known universe in equilibrium

Hubble's "NGC6822, a Remote Stellar System" (*Astrophysical Journal*, 1925) — "the first object definitely assigned to a region outside the galactic system"

Atlases

Ptolemy's [Cosmographia] (first Greek edition edited by Erasmus, 1533; written by AD 170) — coordinates that made possible the construction of the first accurate atlas of the world

Bartholomew's Oxford Economic Atlas (1937) — economic geography with a great amount of detail clearly and superbly depicted

Bartholomew's Times Atlas of the World (1967) — a model of good design for presenting the geography of the World clearly and comprehensively

Autobiography

Cellini's Vita di Benvenuto Cellini, Orfice e Scultore Fiorentino da lui Medesimo (1703 [Life of Benvenuto Cellini, Florentine Goldsmith and Sculptor Written by Himself]) — exceptional for its viviness and candor and as an eye-witness account of 16th Century Renaissance art

Rousseau, Les Confessions (Oeuvres Posthumes, vol. 9; 1781) — set the precedent for honesty in autobiography

Franklin's Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin (1st edition in French, 1791) — an exemplary life with consistently good advice on how to live one

Douglas' Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas (1845) — slavery, exhortation, and excellent prose

Twain's Roughing It (1872) — seven years in Nevada, California, and Hawaii at early points in his and their developments

Sullivan's Autobiography of an Idea (1924) — exceptional on childhood experiences and important for the origin and design of the skyscraper

Geronimo, Geronimo's Story of His Life (1906) — oral autobiography of an Indian leader with comprehensive and reliable information on daily life of the Apache while still an independent people

Lindbergh, Spirit of St. Louis (1953) — how the first non-stop trans-Atlantic crossing by air was planned; written as though the flight were taking place

Biography

Plutarch's Vitae Illustrium Virorum (Greek, 1517; written by AD c. 120 [Lives of the Illustrious]) — the history of Greece and Rome through parallel lives; including the lives of Philopoemen, Alexander, Caesar, and Dion

Suetonius' Vitae XII Caesarum (1470; written by AD c. 140 [Lives of the Twelve Caesars]) — how absolute power can be used and misused.

Vasari's Le Vite de' Piv Eccellenti Pittori, Scvltori, e Architettori (2nd ed., 1568 [Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects]) — the principal source for biographical information on Renaissance artists and architects

Condivi's Vita di Michelangelo Buonarroti (1553 [Life of...]) — A life of unparalleled accomplishment in art and architecture. Most

of the information was evidently supplied by Michelangelo in response to the first edition of the biography by Vasari (who expanded and corrected his second edition)

Biology

Theophrastus' De Historia et Causis Plantarum (1495-1498; written by 287 BC [Enquiry into Plants]) — created botany as a separate field of study

Linnaeus' Systema Naturae (1735; 10th edition, 1758-1759 [Natural System]) — provided the first framework to encompass all organisms uniformly and systematically

Hooke's Micrographia (1665) — perfected the compound microscope and first used it for the study of cellular structure

Cuvier's Le Règne Animal Distribué d'Après son Organisation: pour Servir de Base à l'Histoire Naturelle des Animaux et d'Introduction à l'Anatomie Comparée (1817) — first major study of comparative anatomy

Humboldt and Bonpland, Essai sur la Géographie des Plantes (1807 [Essay on the Geography of Plants]) — compares the distribution of plants by latitude and altitude; a foundation for ecology

Hales's Vegetable Statics (1727) — used experiments and measurements to establish how sap moves within plants

Darwin's Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries Visited During the Voyage of H. M. S. Beagle Round the World Under the Command of Capt. Fitz Roy, R. N. (1845) — the background for Evolution and also important for its treatment of anthropology as part of natural history and a major example of travel literature

Pasteur's "Mémoire sur la Fermentation Appelée Lactique," Comptes Rendus 45 (1857 [Treatise on Lactic Fermentation]), pp. 913-916 — established that microorganisms cause fermentation and decay (leading to his discovery of their role in disease)

Darwin and Wallace, "On the Tendency of Species to Form Varieties: and on the Perpetuation of Varieties and Species by Natural Means of Selection," Journal of the Linnaean Society (Zoology) 3 (1858), 45-63

Darwin's On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life (1859) — established through the extensive use of inductive evidence that existing species evolve from pre-existing species; explained extinction and provided a new basis for biology

Mendel's "Versuche über Pflanzen-Hybriden," Verhandlungen des Naturforschenden Vereines in Brünn (1866 [Experiments on Hybrid Plants])

Morgan's American Beaver (1868) — comprehensive and systematic record of undisturbed beaver colonies made shortly before being destroyed

Books Arts

Biblia Latina (c. 1455 [Latin Bible]) — the masterpiece of Gutenberg, who invented and perfected movable type

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Dürer's *Apocalipsis cum Figuris* (1498 [Apocalypse Illustrated]) — unsurpassed virtuosity in woodcuts as individual prints

Holbein's *Les Simulachres & Historieés Faces de la Mort* (1585 [True and Historical Views of Death]) — set a new standard for book illustrations

Piranesi's *Vedute di Roma* (1748-1778 [Views of Rome]) — the finest set of etchings

Audubon's *Birds of America from Original Drawings* (1827-1838) — the finest natural history illustrations created through the use of watercolored engravings

Chemistry

Lavoisier's *Traité Élémentaire de Chimie* (1789 [Elementary Treatise on Chemistry]) — minimized the number of known elements through scientific analysis of compounds

Dalton's *New System of Chemical Philosophy* (1808, 1810) — determined relative weights for known elements and created a periodic table to show a system of relationships

Correspondence

Cicero's *Epistolae ad Atticum, Brutum, & Q. Fratrem* (1562 [Letters to....]) — the

most substantial body of letters surviving from the Ancient World; important as history and literature and for its influence on the development of languages

Pliny the Younger's *Epistolae* (1476 [Letters]) — the only other substantial body of letters to survive from the Ancient World; reveals much about daily life and the practice of law

Jefferson, Adams, and Adams' Adams-Jefferson Letters (1959) — two friends and political adversaries explain themselves to one another

Diaries

Pepys's *Diary of Samuel Pepys*... ed. By Richard Griffin Baybrook et al. (1899; 10 vols.) — first nearly complete edition of a diary written in the 17th Century and partially published in 1841; Pepys held a high position in the government of Charles II

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And remember to read **Part 2** of **Gene's** list in an upcoming issue of **ATG**. — **KS**