

I Always Hated Bibliographies BUT...

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There's an old saying "what goes around, comes around" but I never thought it pertained to librarianship. When I became a librarian in 1974 in IU's Government Publications Department, I was assigned the task of compiling some quick bibliographies on hot topics to speed up the process of finding uncatalogued documents for student research papers. It was also an excellent training exercise for a young librarian to learn the art of correctly citing government documents in MLA or whatever style one might be required to use. In clearing out my office a year or so ago, I found a folder of them. The topics probably have not changed much (e.g., drunk driving, endangered species, I-69, and drug abuse), but we might have to add texting while driving to the list now. Once we had cataloged the documents and numerous online databases appeared, I assumed the chore of creating bibliographies would disappear. Citation management software like Endnote and Zotero plus the citation features accompanying many of the major databases further added to my attitude. I was thrilled because I never really enjoyed the task. Retirement has led me to believe I was looking through the rose-colored glasses of academic librarianship.

In various volunteer retirement activities, I have had several people ask me to recommend a list of readings. The hated bibliography is needed by people who do not have access to the hundreds of online databases IU library users take for granted, and also by IU affiliates who do not have the patience to search from one database to the other to assess quality information. Too often librarians assume all researchers know all the databases and which one might be the best for the research at hand. Patrons assume that they will identify and find everything through Google or some other search engine, even though many of the best articles and books might never be found that way. Maybe I am prejudiced too, because many reports, maps, and government documents do not have the level of metadata assigned that would allow them to appear through a Google search. This article explores the three or four topics I have been working on and why bibliographies might be useful even in this electronic age.

At a 2015 meeting in New Castle of the various county cemetery commissions around Indiana, we discussed stone carvers and the way they signed the various tombstones. I was surprised that many of the attendees had not heard of some of the standard works on the topic, so I have been working on a bibliography, that I hope will be published, listing the most important and interesting articles for anyone working in Indiana cemeteries. Because of the limestone industry and IUB's excellent Geology and Folklore Collections, IU librarians are pretty familiar with these topics. IU's own Keith Buckley wrote, with Ann Nolan, *Indiana Stonecarver: The Story of Thomas R. Reding*.⁴ It will surprise no one to discover that many articles are not readily accessible online because they are still under copyright or only available through subscription databases. Stone carvers are studied by scientists because of geology, by the folklorists because of the art and symbolism involved, and by the historians and genealogists because of the documentation of individuals. Information on tombstone carvers and carving has been published in this country since the 1700s in all formats, including newspaper ads,

⁴ Ann Nolan, and Keith A. Buckley, *Indiana Stonecarver: The Story of Thomas R. Reding*, Indiana Historical Society, 1984. <http://www.worldcat.org/title/indiana-stonecarver-the-story-of-thomas-r-reding/oclc/10520839>

scholarly articles and books, instructional manuals, and dissertations. Why should I have expected the everyday citizen to know where all these resources might be found?

Another volunteer organization I have joined is the Indiana Barn Foundation. Many of you know I now live on my father's farm in Jennings County, and the family owns several barns built during the late 1800s or early 1900s. These structures are quickly disappearing from our Hoosier landscape, yet when you drive I-70 from Richmond to Indianapolis or I-65 from IUSE or IUNW to Indianapolis or I-69 from IPFW to Indianapolis, you see the iconic landscape throughout – the old barn with silo either painted beautifully in red and white or abandoned. The greatest barns might be from IU South Bend or IU Kokomo down Route 31 where you see several round barns. These round barns are also disappearing due to windstorms and neglect. A bibliography on barns is rather brief with only a dozen or so books written about barns in Indiana, but I've delighted in some of the mention of barns in local newspapers, often dating when a specific barn was built. The project I've found most interesting is a kind-of then/now look at some of the more iconic barns. Specifically, I have enjoyed trying to locate barns illustrated in the county atlases published in more than 80 counties between 1870 and 1920. An excellent bibliographic guide exists to the microfilm of these atlases, but of course, I wanted to find them online. So, I've prepared a list of where the atlases (but also the county histories) are available digitally. The print copies of both the atlases and histories are frequently available at the local public library but visiting 92 county libraries or using the microfilm is not always easy for barn enthusiasts to do. My little list of where these resources are online could lead to saving some of the more magnificent structures, especially if local historical, agricultural, or genealogical societies could highlight them in articles in local newspapers. Just recently I have been enthralled with historic images of barns and delight on finding images within digitization projects like the Hohenberger Collection at IU,⁵ the Indiana Historical Society Image collection,⁶ and many others too numerous to list. I've not started a bibliography yet on this sort of thing but it is certainly handy for Facebook entries on the organizations for which I volunteer.



Barn in the Jefferson Proving Ground showing a fence between the military district and private owner. Jefferson Proving Ground (located near Madison Indiana) has been closed.⁷

The role of librarians is radically different now than 40 years ago, and yet facilitating information exchange should remain one of our profession's greater contributions to society. Librarians should

⁵ Frank M. Hohenberger Photograph Collection, <https://libraries.indiana.edu/resources/hohenberger>.

⁶ Indiana Historical Society Digital Images, <http://images.indianahistory.org/>.

⁷ See <http://images.indianahistory.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/V0002/id/3413/rec/17>.

remain leaders in making sure research is correctly cited and identified. Compiling bibliographies can ease access when online searches yield the recent, open-access materials, and chit-chat of social media. I am not contending that there is anything wrong with online searches or with social media, yet enabling the public to know there are resources beyond this should be one of the trademarks of our profession.

I still hate bibliographies and the tedious work involved in making sure every citation follows the style manual to perfection. I still hate trying to write annotations that are not too wordy yet convince the reader it's a source that should be consulted. Nevertheless, I relent and have to admit there is still a need, if not a greater need, for them, simply because of the overwhelming amount of information out there. So what goes around has come full circle (i.e., today's researcher may not have trouble finding sources, but discovering the best ones may still need a good bibliography). In conclusion, I searched the Internet to verify the quote "what goes around comes around" and find it is part of a song by Justin Timberlake. Thus, it should not have surprised me that the phrase pertains to librarianship as well as to Justin's broken heart.