

LIT PICKS

A curated selection of the Web's literary tidbits

"Lit Picks" is our DC Public Library insider's guide to the literary pieces we're reading, liking and sharing. We hope you enjoy our look at some of the best and most interesting items the Web has to offer on books, reading and life.

District of Change: A New DCPL Series



The *District of Change* is an ongoing series at the DC Public Library examining the transformation of Washington, D.C. It is produced by *Slate* editor David Plotz and published author Hanna Rosin in conjunction with the DC Public Library Foundation. Each event will address a topic pertaining to D.C. culture and

feature a panel of guests who will lead the discussion.

Please join us on **Wednesday, May 21st at 7 PM** at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library for our first event. The first topic we will explore is D.C.'s changing art and music scene.

The evening will be hosted by [Matthew Yglesias](#), former *Slate* correspondent and current Executive Editor of *Vox Media*. Panelists include [Holly Bass](#), a multidisciplinary performance and visual artist, writer and director; D.C. musician, composer, producer, filmmaker, and former *Fugazi* drummer, [Brendan Canty](#); and [Victoria Reis](#), co-founder and executive & artistic director for Transformer D.C., a nonprofit that supports and promotes local artists.

Upcoming topics for *District of Change* will include education, gentrification, transportation and more.

RSVP for this event at districtofchange.eventbrite.com.

American Libraries Strike a Pose

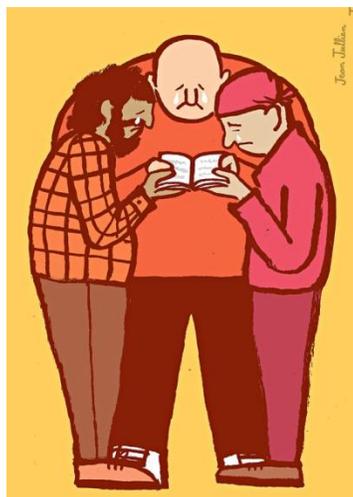
Since starting the project in 1994, Texan photographer Robert Dawson has photographed over 100 public libraries across 48 states. Some of the libraries he has photographed are neglected and dilapidated, such as [Detroit's Mark Twain branch](#), while others are famous and thriving, such as [Seattle's Central Library](#). Dawson's photographs have recently been published in [The Public Library: A Photographic Essay by Robert Dawson](#).



In addition to essays by Bill Moyers and Ann Patchett, accomplished poet Charles Simic contributed an eloquent personal essay to Dawson's book. He describes his experience with public libraries, and why their existence is necessary for upholding an educated, democratic society. Simic's nostalgic essay is a must-read. Click [here](#) for the full text.

Despite obstacles, Dawson ultimately observes that public libraries have managed to "adapt and transform to their communities." Click [here](#) to see a slideshow of 27 of the most fascinating libraries. You can also pick up a copy of [The Most Beautiful Libraries in the World](#) or [Presidential Libraries and Museums: An Illustrated Guide](#) at the MLK Library.

The Power of Poetry: Poems That Make Grown Men Cry



Big girls don't cry, but apparently grown men do - given the proper poem. If your tear ducts have recovered from seeing *Twelve Years a Slave* in theaters, you may be ready to pick up a copy of Anthony Holden's [Poems that Make Grown Men Cry](#).

In this candid anthology, whose release coincided with National Poetry Month, 100 prominent men concede to being moved to tears by powerful poems. The diverse array of men involved represent over 20 nationalities, and vary in age from early 20's to late 80's. Influential contributors include famous actors Daniel Radcliffe, Kenneth Branagh, Colin Firth, TV and film genius J.J. Abrams, poet Bill Collins, and novelists such as Jonathan Franzen and Salman Rushdie.

The *Guardian* recently published a [piece](#) adapted from the preface of Holden's anthology, in which he divulges his inspiration and the subsequent process behind compiling the collection. In the article, Holden also reveals that five pairs of the 100 men picked the same poem, although for different reasons.

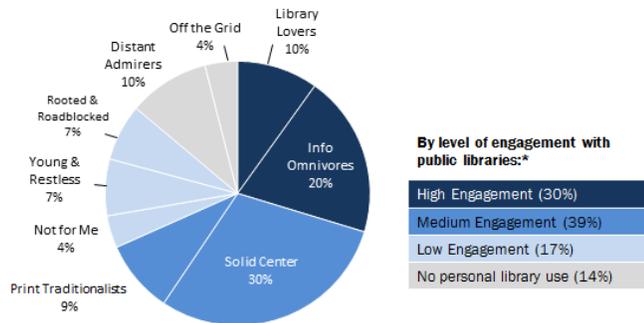
If you are due for a good cry, visit Georgetown Library for their new [monthly poetry](#)

[reading.](#)

What Loving your Library Says About You (Spoiler: It's All Positive!)

Typology snapshot: Groups by level of engagement with public libraries

Each group as a percentage of the general U.S. population (Americans ages 16+)



* percentages in the chart may not add up to the percentages in the legend due to rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center's Library Services Survey of 6,224 Americans ages 16 and older conducted July 18-September 30, 2013.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

While libraries will always embrace the isolated and disenfranchised members of society, it turns out that those most devoted to their local library are more socially inclined than those who don't visit.

[A Pew research study](#) that was released last month paints a very positive profile of the active library aficionado. Those who value and utilize their public libraries the most (30% of the population) tend to be avid readers, technologically savvy and more engaged in

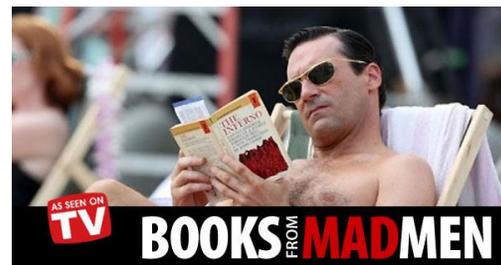
their communities. They are also more likely to socialize with friends and family, and attend museums and sporting events.

The low engagement and non-engagement segmentations are less likely to partake in civil and social engagements, and are less familiar with new technology. Increased visits to the public library were also associated with significant life events such as having a child, searching for a new job, and being a student. Click [here](#) to see the full report.

If you love the DC Public Library and want to help shape its transformation, please provide feedback regarding MLK Library's upcoming renovation. [Check out the digital Idea Community to share your ideas and see what others have suggested.](#)

Don Draper's Book Shelf in 1969

Some have called it the most literary show on television. If you have been a fan of the show *Mad Men*, then you know its creator Matthew Weiner has an astute penchant for detail and historical accuracy when it comes to capturing the era of the show. Everything from the music to the wardrobe to the books the characters read transports the viewer back to a different time.

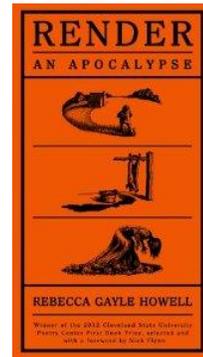


In previous seasons, relevant pieces of literature such as *Exodus*, *Atlas Shrugged*, and *The Inferno* have served as props to further communicate the time period, embellish

the storyline, and provide insight into the characters. The year is 1969 as we enter the seventh and final season of *Mad Men*, and *Flavorwire.com* has compiled a [list](#) of 12 influential and relevant books from 1969 that could potentially be woven into the current season. In order to brush up on literature from this time, pick up a copy of [The Godfather](#), [Portnoy's Complaint](#), or [I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings](#) at DC Public Library. Pay close attention to the rest of this season to see if Ginsberg will tote a copy of Kurt Vonnegut's [Slaughterhouse-five](#), or if Betty's nightstand will support a copy of Margaret Atwood's [Edible Woman](#). Click [here](#) to see a list of other famous novels that have made it into the show.

The Poetry Playlist

Music and poetry possess many similar qualities, such as a reliance on rhythm and use of descriptive imagery to appeal to emotions. Poignant verses and potent stanzas allow people to relate love, pain, and wrath in a way that can be difficult to articulate in one's own words. Poetry evolved from song, and a well written song is poetry. In an effort to explore the intersection of music and poetry, [themillions.com](#) staff writer Nick Ripatrazone has asked his ten favorite poets to identify the music that influenced their poetic compositions. While some writers, such as poet Catherine Pierce, require total silence in order to concentrate and create, others look to song for inspiration.



Click [here](#) to see the playlist and read about the ways in which the songs informed the poems. For example, [Stevie Wonder's](#) "I Don't Know Why I love You" tells the painful tale of unrequited love - a central theme in Rebecca Gayle Howell's *Render*, about a man who has forgotten how to live, and therefore how to be tender. In a separate example, Wendy Chin-Tanner's *Through the Bathroom Door* was a direct result of listening to the [Beatles](#) "She Came in Through the Bathroom Window."

Public Libraries Breaking the Mold



Yet another article has been published on the modernization of public libraries. The *NY Times* piece ["Breaking out of the Library Mold, in Boston and Beyond"](#) specifically cites Boston, the oldest urban public library in the country, as an example of this transformation occurring across the country. Comparable to the upcoming [re-design of D.C.'s Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library](#), Boston's Johnson library is undergoing renovation to convert their "granite shell" exterior into a diaphanous, open space with a view of Boylston Street.

Public libraries have reinvented their essential role within the community by offering advanced technology services. Chicago Public Library's Maker Lab is comprised of 3-D printers, laser cutters and milling machines. MLK Library's [Digital Commons](#) also offers a wealth of cutting-edge equipment for 3-D printing, 3-D scanning and self-publishing.

While the role of librarians has shifted as a result of access to technology and endless resources, they are more vital than ever in navigating the information landscape.

Upcoming Library Events

Please join us at DC Public Library for any of these wonderful upcoming events, and check out the [calendar](#) for even more fantastic programming at your local library:

- [Author Talk with Chinelo Okparanta, whose story collection, *Happiness, Like Water* was Editor's Choice in the *NYTimes Sunday Review*.](#)
 - Tenley-Friendship Library, 5/5/14 at 7 PM.
- [Author Talk with Susan Katz Miller of *Being Both: Embracing Two Religions in One Interfaith Family*.](#)
 - MLK Library, 5/7/14 at 7:30 PM.
- [Presentation by NASA's Chief Architect for Space Communications and Navigation, James Schier, on Human Space Exploration.](#)
 - Southwest Library, 5/14/14 at 7 PM.
- [5th Annual Tour de DCPL: A Bike Tour of DCPL](#)
 - Southeast Library, 5/17/14 at 9 AM.
- [District of Change: Making D.C. A Better District for the Arts](#)
 - MLK Library, 5/21/14 at 7 PM.

Round up your family and attend one of our many events surrounding El Día De Los Niños (Children's Day), where we celebrate family, children, and early literacy for children of all linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Click [here](#) to see a calendar of Día events at our neighborhood libraries.

The DC Public Library Foundation thanks you for your support! Now is a very exciting time to invest in the future of the DC Public Library. If you haven't already, please give this year! Visit dclibrary.org/giving to learn more about the Literati and the Ex Libris Society giving memberships, and donate today!