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Review Article

A Man Is Known by His Library (or the Manifold Attractions of a Man Who Reads)

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Abstract

A concerning conundrum has appeared in the 21st century regarding men and reading. Men today are not reading. Or at least they are reading less. This essay examines this phenomenon of decline of men and reading in a 21st century context. It bookends a discussion of this singularity with a playful but solicitous discussion of male characters created in the literature of Jane Austen, but uses the popularity of the novels of Jack Carr to offer some solutions. Section I sets forth current demographics on men and reading, works to explain those facts, and tenders a history of the publishing industry that attempts to uncover a perspective of the current state of the topic. Section II then considers what exactly male readers are reading, if anything, and why. Tracing the masculinity factor in literature, this section explores what may be missing in modern literature and why that may be the case. Then Section III applies that analysis to what librarians are saying that men and women of sustainable reading character can do to build their own personal or family library to influence generations to come. Is a man truly known by his library? Or it may be that all is needed to acquire the manifold attractions of a man who reads is a good book in a comfortable library.

Keywords

Men, Reading, Jane Austen, Jack Carr, Library, Libraries, Literature, Masculinity

1. Introduction

In Jane Austen's beloved novel *Pride and Prejudice* the reader finds in the early scenes the heroine's father, Mr. Bennet, in his private library.[1] [1] There in his own reading room which also serves as his office, study, and personal retreat space, he is comfortably surrounded by his soothing and treasured books.[2] [1] He is a man who reads.[3] [1]

Shortly thereafter the reader is exposed to the contrast of the two central heroes of the story - Mr. Bingley, who always finds something else to do besides reading,[4] [5] having books "more than I ever look into;"[5] [1] and Mr. Darcy, where he and his "delightful library" at his estate at Pemberley seem to

[1]A LADY, PRICE AND PREJUDICE, Ch. 3 (1813) (where Mr. Bingley returns the visit from Mr. Bennet in the former's library where a visitor is lucky indeed to enter).
[2]*Id*. Other potential male readers of these early chapters include some militia members who are noted as "now very often standing in Clarke's library." *Id*. at Ch. 7. Whether they were reading or not is left to the reader's imagination.
[3]*Id*. (where the women return from the Meryton ball to find "Mr. Bennet still up. With a book, he was regardless of time.").
[4]*Pride and Prejudice*, Movie (2005) depicting the scene noted, notes 5 and 6.
[5]A LADY, PRICE AND PREJUDICE, note 1, at Ch. 8, when Mr. Bingley relates exactly how he feels about books.

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be the archetypical models for a man worthy of female attention.[6] [1]

Or is he? And is a man truly known by his library? An able reader of Austen's classic literature might glean her offered insight and instruction on what has become in contemporary life a serious and concerning conundrum of men and reading.[7] [6, 8] Men today are not reading.[8] [9] Or at least they are reading less.[9] [9] This essay examines this phenomenon of decline of men and reading in a 21st century context.

Section I offers current demographics on men and reading, works to explain those facts, and tenders a history of the publishing industry that attempts to uncover a perspective of the current state of the topic. Section II then considers what exactly male readers are reading, if anything, and why. Tracing the masculinity factor in literature, this section explores what may be missing in modern literature and why that may be the case. Then Section III applies that analysis to what librarians are saying that men and women of sustainable reading character can do to build their own personal or family library to influence generations to come.

Men (and women) who read and surround themselves with books might just be the social influencers waiting right around the corner, and some are already attempting to carve out this niche.[10] It may be that all that is needed is a good read in a formidable yet comforting library.

2. Demographics on Men and Reading

According to a recent study by the National Endowment for the Arts, roughly one in four men read a novel or short story in 2022, compared with fewer than half of all women.[11] [9] This decline in reading appears to commence at an early age, as new evidence from surveys in the UK and the U.S. reveals trend data which corresponds with a reduction in the shares of 9-year-olds and 13-year-olds who now read for fun.[12] [9] These are roughly the same ages most children receive a smartphone, [13] [10] and are exposed to other media.[14] [11] These reading facts seem to correlate a bit with those for adults, as according to this data fewer than half (48.5 percent) of all U.S. adults read a book of any type in the previous year of the survey study (which would have been 2021), compared with 52.7 percent of adults in 2017 and 54.6 percent in 2012, indicating that reading in general is in decline.[15] [9]

Importantly, the declines seem to be experienced more proportionately by men, as there exists nearly a 20-point spread in the percentages of men and women who read fiction in 2012.[16] [12] That year, 54.6 percent of women were estimated to have done so, compared with 35.1 percent of men.[17] [9] Statistics, particularly regarding male readership, have only continued their decline in the following years.[18] [9, 12, 13]

Why this proportionate separation between men and

Elizabeth… walked towards a table where a few books were lying. He [Bingley] immediately offered to fetch her others – all that his library afforded.
'And I wish my collection were larger for your benefit and my own credit; but I am an idle fellow, and though I have not many I have more than I ever look into." *Id*.

[6]*Id*. at least according to the supercilious Caroline Bingley. The exchange includes Miss Bingley chiefly expressing how she feels about the size of a man's library:
'I am astonished,' said Miss Bingley, 'that my father should have left so small a collection of books. – What a delightful library you have at Pemberley, Mr. Darcy!'
'It ought to be good,' he replied, 'it has been the work of many generations.'
'And then you have added so much to it yourself, you are always buying books.'
'I cannot comprehend the neglect of a family library in such days as these.'
Id.

[7]See general discussion notes 3-6. For scholarly treatment of Austen's use of books and reading as a device of characterization, see KATIE HALSEY, JANE AUSTEN AND HER READERS, 1786-1945 (2013); Gillian Dow & Katie Halsey, *Jane Austen's Reading: The Chawton Years* (2010), https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/bitstream/1893/7484/2/Austen's%20Reading%20Pre-publication%20draft.pdf (observing that the cultural resonance of books gives Austen "a sort of convenient shorthand to help her readers swiftly understand her characters").

[8]*Arts Participation Patterns in 2022: Highlights from the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts*, Nat'l. Endowment for the Arts at 5 (2022), https://www.arts.gov/impact/research/publications/arts-participation-patterns-2022-highlights-survey-public-participation-arts (documenting the 2022 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA).)

[9]*Id*. noting rates of male readership decline.

[10]Alluding here to the example of Jack Carr's significant social media presence and following, described *infra* Section II.

[11]Arts Participation Patterns in 2022, note 8. "This report presents key findings from the NEA's flagship survey, which the Census Bureau administers every five years to track arts participation habits." *Id*.

[12]*Id*. referencing the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics.

[13]Justin D. Martin, Stephen Song, Wendy M. Rote, Chighaf Bakour, Logan T. Rance, Joshua M. Scacco, Sean Marcus, *The Life in Media Survey: A Baseline Study of Digital Media Use and Well-Being among 11- to 13-Year-Olds*, Researchers at the University in South Florida in collaboration with The Harris Poll, lifeinmediasurvey.org., (2025), https://www.usf.edu/arts-sciences/departments/journalism/documents/lims2025/lims2025.pdf.
"One in nine children who have their own phone reported getting the device at age 7 or younger. On average, the 11-year-olds we surveyed said they've had a smartphone since they were just over eight and a half years old, while the 12- and 13-year-olds in the study said they got a smartphone when they were nine and a half and ten and a half, respectively. Kids who have tablets get them at even younger ages, on average.
Fifty-two percent of children we surveyed have a phone with a data plan, connecting them to the internet 24/7. Kids reported spending an average of 4.4 hours on their smartphone and/or tablet on schooldays, 6.3 hours on non-school days. One's screentime isn't easy to estimate, so we broke the day into four, six-hour segments and asked kids to estimate their screentime for each."
Id. at 5.

[14]This is also around the ages when they are most likely to be first and unintentionally exposed to pornography *See, e.g.* Meelie Bordoloi, Ila Durkin, Arpit Aggarwal, *Effects of Pornography on Youth: A Review,* 121 Mo. Med. 195 (2024), https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11160374/. "The earliest age noted in the studies was 10 years-old, which also corresponds to the average age at which young boys are exposed to porn, for girls by age 12 to 13." *Id*.

[15]Arts Participation Patterns in 2022, *supra* note 8, at 4.

[16]Sunil Iyengar, *The Men-Women Split in Reading is Real—and Persists Amid Historical Rate Declines,* Nat'l Endowment for the Arts, Jan. 10, 2025, https://www.arts.gov/stories/blog/2025/men-women-split-reading-real-and-persists-amid-historical-rate-declines (noting that "[o]ver the next two periods of data collection, fiction-reading declined at a comparable rate for both genders. The gender gap, therefore, has persisted—with only the declines in women reading having prevented its expansion.").

[17]Arts Participation Patterns in 2022, note 8, at 5.

[18]*Id*. "In 2017, the share of women reading novels or short stories was down to 50.0 percent, and, in 2022, to 46.9 percent. Men readers saw their fiction-reading rate slip from 35.1 percent in 2012 to 33.0 percent in 2017 and then to 27.7 percent in 2022. The net result is that the difference in fiction-reading rates for men and women remains at just over 19 percentage points, as observed ten years earlier." *Id*. For more readership facts *see also generally* Iyengar, *supra* note 16; But *c.f* Constance Grady, *Are men's reading habits truly a national crisis?,* Vox.com, Jan. 3, 2025, https://www.vox.com/culture/392971/men-reading-fiction-statistics-fact-checked (diving deeper in disputing these facts, noting "[t]he truth is that most American adults, regardless of their gender, simply do not read very many books at all.").

women? Several possible explanations present themselves. First, women now dominate the publishing industry.[19] [14, 16]

Research reveals that women comprise 74% of the U.S. publishing workforce,[20] [15] and hold over 80% of marketing, publicity, and literary agent roles.[21] [15] Additional accomplishments are included in scholarly publishing, where 76% of employees are women.[22] [15] And "more women are taking on executive publisher roles in major media houses."[23] [15]

In fairness, men used to dominate the book industry, and the current era may simply be in a prolonged period of overcorrection.[24] [15, 16] It would also be hasty to attribute causation of male decline in readership to its correlation with the rise of women taking over the industry, but there is good reason to at least speculate on causation. For example, in an industry like publishing, diversity can be a strength: if only women sit in publishing meetings trying to decide what their readers want to read, how can they truly know what men want to read? If there are no men in that room to represent male taste, a decline in male readership would be a natural result from the products of this homogeneity: what women *think* men want to read and what men *actually* want to read may not be the same thing.[25]

Another point of consideration is the publishing industry's self-imposed marketing limitations uniquely affecting male readers. Of the men who do read fiction, they most frequently read from the so-called "thriller" genre.[26] [17, 18] But that tag is limiting, as even a cursory reading of the major authors tagged as thriller writers shows. The works of John Grisham,[27] [19-21] Lee Child,[28] [22-24] Jack Carr,[29] and Tom Clancy, [30] [25] (to name only a few) are certainly thrilling reads, but they are much more than that as well. For example, Clancy's *Patriot Games* is a thrilling Cold War spy story pitting legendary American everyman hero Jack Ryan against a radical Irish Republican Army (IRA) offshoot in the mid-1980s.[31] [25] But that spy game plot merely forwards Clancy's more profound effort to contrast lay Catholic family man Jack Ryan and IRA terrorist Sean Miller.[32] [25] Miller also claims the Catholic tag but embodies its antithesis values, particularly through his efforts to murder families (the Ryans and others) to forward a Marxist political agenda.[33] [25] Clancy makes clear which life is to be more desired, and the male reader in particular may be left deeply affected by the real value Ryan has discovered at home as opposed to the shallow brokenness Miller is left with in the end.[34] [25] That effect on a reader is a quintessentially literary one, far transcending the mere "page-turner" marketing of the Thriller genre—yet *Patriot Games* generally can only be found in the Thriller sections of bookstores, rather than the Literary Fiction sections.[35] [26, 27]

[19]Greg Rosalsky, *Women now dominate the book business*, NPR, Apr. 4, 2023, https://www.npr.org › sections › money › 2023 › 04 › 04 › 1164109676 › women-now-dominate-the-book-business-why-there-and-not-other-creative-industries; *Evolution of Women in Publishing: Progress, Challenges, and Future Projections,* Women in Publishing Summit (2026), https://womeninpublishingsummit.com/evolution-women-in-publishing/ [hereinafter Evolution of Women in Publishing]; Lucy Broadbent, *Why women dominate the book business,* WomenLoveTech.com, May 1, 2024, https://womenlovetech.com/why-women-dominate-the-book-business/ ("women publish more than 50 percent of all books, and the average female authored book sees greater sales and readership than a male authored book" noting among the reasons for this as the industrial revolution, the birth control pill, women's increased educational opportunities, and the feminist movement generally).

[20]Evolution of Women in Publishing, note 19 (citing *Statista*).

[21]*Id*.

[22]*Id*. (citing *CSE Science Editor*).

[23]*Id*. (citing *Publishers Weekly*); but simultaneously stating that women hold only 21% of the executive leadership roles in such publishing companies).

[24]Broadbent, note 19. "Book publishing has seen women surge ahead of men in almost every part of the industry in recent years. Historically, women authored less than 10 percent of the new books published in the US each year. Now, they publish more than 50 percent of them along with selling more books than the average…" *Id*. Furthermore, "in the 1970s**,** only 20% of published books were authored by women. By 2020, women outpaced men in book publication, contributing to industry growth." Evolution of Women in Publishing, note 19 (citing *World Economic Forum*). We might add a comment here on 200 years of changes, where Jane Austen felt she had to identify herself as "A Lady" rather than give her real name to avert publisher avoidance.

[25]There is certainly some overlap in this area which will be examined *infra* Section II.

[26]"Thrillers were originally written by, for, and about men, with the primary readers of thrillers being men until the late 20th century." Linda Rodriguez, *Men and Women – Thrillers and Mystery*, Hppr.org, Feb. 11, 2019, https://www.hppr.org/hppr-arts-culture-history/2019-02-08/men-and-women-thrillers-and-mysteries; see also Linda Rodriguez, *Who Reads What: Thrillers, Mysteries, and Gender Lines,* Oct. 3, 2015, WritersWhoKill.blogspot.com.; https://writerswhokill.blogspot.com/2015/10/who-reads-what-thrillers-mysteries-and.html.

[27]See, e.g., John Grisham, A Time to Kill (1989) (a Mississippi revenge trial that is at bottom a study of race, fatherhood, and the limits of law); John Grisham, The Firm (1991) (a young associate's discovery that his firm serves organized crime, structured throughout by questions of professional loyalty and complicity); John Grisham, The Rainmaker (1995) (a novice lawyer's suit against an insurer, doubling as a critique of the legal profession itself).

[28] See, e.g., Lee Child, Killing Floor (1997) (introducing Jack Reacher, the itinerant former Army military policeman, in a novel as concerned with rootlessness and fraternal loyalty as with crime); Lee Child, The Enemy (2004) (a prequel set at the close of the Cold War, examining institutional decay within the Army and the death of Reacher's mother); Lee Child, 61 Hours (2010) (a siege narrative turning on the duty to protect a vulnerable witness).

[29]Discussed infra notes 58-63.

30Tom Clancy, Patriot Games (1987)(spy novel about revenge of an IRA terrorist), Tom Clancy, The Hunt for Red October (1984)(the defection of a Russian nuclear warship), Tom Clancy, Clear and Present Danger (1989), Tom Clancy, Rainbow Six (1998)(a techno thriller about an apocalyptic conspiracy, to later become an extremely popular video game).

[31]Tom Clancy, Patriot Games (1987) (opening with Ryan's intervention in an Ulster Liberation Army ambush on members of the Royal Family in London, an act that draws his own wife and daughter into the conflict).

[32]*Id.* Miller's nominal Catholicism is set against Ryan's practiced faith and domestic life, and that contrast structures the novel's moral argument. *Id*. [Note: we have supplied the citation but deliberately not the quoted passages at notes 32-34 as pinpoint page cites should be keyed to the edition used – of which there are many.]

[33]*Id.* The Ulster Liberation Army is portrayed as a Marxist splinter faction ideologically distinct from the Provisional IRA, whose operations extend to attacks on Ryan's family.

[34]*Id.* (contrasting the survival and reconstitution of Ryan's family with Miller's isolation and destruction in the final assault on the Ryan home on the Chesapeake Bay).

[35]Shelf placement is largely a function of the publisher's BISAC subject codes rather than of any editorial judgment about literary merit. See *BISAC Subject Codes*, Book Indus. Study Grp., https://www.bisg.org/BISAC-Subject-Codes-main (last visited Aug. 19, 2026) (the subject heading assigned to a book "can determine where the work is shelved in a brick and mortar store"); *BISAC FAQ*, Book Indus. Study Grp., https://www.bisg.org/BISAC-FAQ (last visited Aug. 19, 2026) (retailers map the headings to their own store sections). Clancy's novels carry the FICTION / Thrillers headings (FIC031000 et seq.) rather than FICTION / Literary (FIC019000) (including codes from the copyright page of the particular edition

In contrast to bookstore-style promotion, libraries have always served as cultural icons, the popularity of which is somewhat of a sign post for the intellectual development of a society, and one that used to be shared by men and women alike.[36] [28] Regardless of how the internet may change available knowledge,[37] [29] public libraries, while providing access to technology and other resources,[38] [29] will always be focused on books.[39] [30] Even in a time when libraries are experiencing transformational change, in both methodology and principles, the library as an institution sets the pace for the broader context of reading.[40] [31] Libraries do not have to promote books by genre, but rather by author, simply fiction versus non-fiction.[41] [32]

Examining the current state of the art of reading is important for a flourishing society.

"Even if many factors—such as competing options for one's leisure time, including participation in social media, and/or addiction to one's phone and the many addictive applications and content they provide—have conspired to erode the percentage of all adults who read novels or stories, what accounts for the seemingly chronic depression of fiction-reading rates among men?"[42] [12]

It is also imperative to consider the data regarding how well boys read, in addition to how often they read, and "ask whether and how formal instruction from elementary school through middle and high school, and (if applicable) all the way through higher education, are affecting their leisure reading behavior as adults."[43] [12] Apart from educational, school, and family influences, "it will be print and online publishers, libraries, literary arts organizations and programs—and, above all, writers—who have the best chance of boosting men's reading rates."[44] [12]

These concerns lead directly into the masculinity factor in literature, what are men willing to read, and what makes men choose to read.

3. The Masculinity Factor in Literature

The male author of this piece offers a personal testimony: simply put, amongst men, it has become unpopular to read fiction. Reading fiction is seen as a feminine activity and a waste of time with no practical benefit.[45] [4] Amongst modern male culture, men are expected to read nonfiction with the goal of improving themselves in some way.[46] [33] In their minds, it may to be that there is no point to reading a story that didn't really happen. There are obvious contradictions in this worldview (for example, men do not apply this to watching movies or television, as they happily binge away on the latest fictional Netflix or HBO series).[47] [35] But these concerns are merely described to remove any illusions from the reader of this article: male culture has seemed to turn against literary pursuits outside of nonfiction.

Therefore, we must now analyze why the male reading culture has retrograded so far from the artistic pursuits they used to dominate and ask if there are any signs of change on the horizon.

There can be no doubt that the rise of technology and its worst excesses have contributed to the decline of reading amongst men in particular.[48] [10, 12] These factors seem to place men at a disadvantage in reading from an early age.[49]

cited).

[36] *See, e.g.* Md. Ashimuzzaman, *The Role of the Library in Society*, LIS ED. NETWORK, Feb. 14, 2024, https://www.lisedunetwork.com/library-as-a-cultural-organization-the-librarys-role-in-community-identity/ (explaining the cultural role the library plays in any community's identity).

[37] Phayung Meesad & Anirach Mingkhwan, *The Evolving Role of Libraries: From Repositories to Dynamic Hubs,* in MEESAD P. MINGKHWAN, LIBRARIES IN TRANSITION, Cham Singer (2024), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69216-1_2 (noting the role of libraries in a world of advancing technology). "Libraries have long served as guardians of knowledge, preserving and providing access to information in support of learning, research, and societal advancement." *Id.*

[38] "Beyond traditional roles as book repositories, libraries have evolved into dynamic institutions fostering education [and] cultural heritage…" *Id.*

[39] *See* Anthony Ha, *10 Ways Public Libraries Make Our Lives Better*, Ind. Lens, PBS, Spr. 28, 2025, https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/blog/more-than-books-10-different-ways-public-libraries-make-our-lives-better/ stating that "it's more important than ever to explain why the nation needs them [meaning libraries]. Any answer must begin, of course, with books. Lending books is at the core of any good library's mission…."

[40] For example, law libraries are going through major transformational change, as indicated by Adam Zeigler, *The Harvard Library Innovation Lab*, THE PRACTICE (Mar/Apr 2019), https://clp.law.harvard.edu/knowledge-hub/magazine/issues/the-evolution-of-law-libraries/the-harvard-library-innovation-lab/.

[41] "Most libraries in the United States are organized the same way. The collection is divided into fiction and nonfiction sections. Fiction is then sorted alphabetically by author's last name, and nonfiction is most frequently organized using the Dewey Decimal System." Nikki DeMarco, *How I Genrefied My School Library and What I Learned Along The Way,* Jan. 31, 2025, BookRiot.com, https://bookriot.com › how-i-genrefied-my-school-library.

"Genrefication" (organizing books according to genre) may nonetheless be relevant for libraries depending on readership to be developed, as DeMarco sets forth in the rest of her discussion. *Id.*

[42] Iyengar, note 16. *See also* Arts Participation Patterns in 2022, note 8.

[43] Iyengar, note 16.

[44] *Id.*

[45] Austen anticipated this posture, and it belongs to a man. In NORTHANGER ABBEY, the boorish John Thorpe dismisses novels outright — "Not I; I never read novels; I have something else to do" — before conceding that he had in fact read one. JANE AUSTEN, NORTHANGER ABBEY ch. 7 (1817). It is Thorpe, not his sister Isabella, who disdains fiction: Isabella and Catherine Morland are enthusiasts, and Austen defends the novel in her own voice at chapter 5. See note 115.

[46] *Studies Have Shown That Men Read Less Fiction. Jenna Bush Hager Asked Why*, TODAY (Nov. 12, 2024), https://www.today.com/life/men-reading-fiction-rcna179463 (reporting novelist Amor Towles's observation that men gravitate to nonfiction because they can rely on the subject and know what they are going to get); see also Kate Summers, *Adult Reading Habits and Preferences in Relation to Gender Differences*, 52 REFERENCE & USER SERVS. Q. 243 (2013), https://journals.ala.org/rusq/article/view/3319/3535 (roughly twice as many men as women reported a preference for nonfiction).

[47] On the scale of the competing medium, see *Streaming Reaches Historic TV Milestone, Eclipses Combined Broadcast and Cable Viewing for First Time*, NIELSEN (June 17, 2025), https://www.nielsen.com/news-center/2025/streaming-reaches-historic-tv-milestone-eclipses-combined-broadcast-and-cable-viewing-for-first-time/ (streaming accounted for 44.8% of all television viewership in May 2025, exceeding broadcast and cable combined, with streaming usage up 71% over four years).

[48] *See* Iyengar, note 16 (identifying competing leisure options, social media participation, and phone addiction among the factors eroding adult fiction-reading rates); *Life in Media Survey*, note 13, at 5 (11- to 13-year-olds reported averaging 4.4 hours of smartphone and tablet use on school days and 6.3 hours on non-school days).

[49] Some key factors that rely heavily on technology delivery seem to be significant in this discussion: pornography, gaming, and online betting. Pornography's nearly

[36-44] They particularly seem to inoculate men to the treasures achieved through determined reading.

Furthermore, men may view the world of fiction as almost entirely lacking any elements that appeal to their masculinity, which may be attributed to female dominance of the publishing industry: their voices and tastes are simply not represented there.[50] And because they view the fiction section of the library as almost entirely void of anything masculine, a quality which they may associate with utility, [51] [45] they may collectively conclude that anything in that section of the library is frivolous.[52] [34] These facts live seemingly in contradiction with other artistic mediums; for example, men do not apply this conclusion to the latest Marvel film or hit streaming series.[53] But this seeming contradiction should be alleviated in the reader's mind by remembering the male focus on utility: time and effort is money, and men instinctively know that it only takes little effort and only two hours to watch an *Avengers* film, but it takes much longer to read a book.[54] [46, 47] The book then, in the male mind, had better be worth the time and effort investment. And because of all the factors we have already discussed, most modern fiction seems to fail this cost-benefit analysis in the modern male brain.

Any lover of classic fiction knows that one of its greatest benefits to the reader is experiencing the world from the perspective of different people. Legendary author and literary scholar C. S. Lewis wrote,

"But in reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. Like the night sky in the Greek poem, I see with a myriad eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do."[55] [48]

And to the credit of those women now dominating the publishing industry, a few have allowed this effect to guide them in laboring to know what many men want to read.[56] [49] This effort allows for the hopeful signs of reading and libraries once again becoming masculine and fashionable to the male sex.

One example is Emily Bestler, editor at Simon & Schuster with her own imprint, Emily Bestler Books,[57] [49] seemingly leaning into an author who is leading men out of the darkness and back to the Promised Land C. S. Lewis described. In the mid-2010s, Bestler discovered and invested in an aspiring male fiction author who had recently retired from the American military and sought to make writing his post-military career.[58] [50] That writer is former Navy SEAL Jack Carr, and his first work Bestler gambled on was 2018's *The Terminal List*.[59] [52] It became a runaway bestseller, launching a series of eight books and counting, nearly all following its hero, ex-SEAL James Reece and his exploits avenging his family and continuing to defend his country.[60] [51, 53-58] The series is

ubiquitous presence, combined with the notion that men are marginally more susceptible to habitually viewing pornography than women seem to stand out. On this consumption gap, *see* Ingrid Solano, Nicholas R. Eaton & K. Daniel O'Leary, *Pornography Consumption, Modality and Function in a Large Internet Sample*, 57 J. Sex Rsch. 92 (2020) (estimating lifetime consumption at 91.5% of men and 60.2% of women in a sample of 1,415 U.S. adults), collected in *How Many Women Watch Porn?*, Fight the New Drug (Nov. 20, 2025), https://fightthenewdrug.org/how-do-men-and-womens-porn-site-searches-differ/.

Pornography viewing is not, and has never been, 'a man's problem' per se, but male viewership rates are at least marginally higher than women's. Add to this the fact that most people (men and women alike) are first unintentionally exposed to internet pornography, without parental knowledge, between the ages of 7 and 13, and any blooming reading habits in their young lives are often choked out before they can take any root. See British Board of Film Classification, Young People, Pornography & Age-Verification (2020) (a majority of children exposed by age 13, some as young as seven); Paul J. Wright, Bryant Paul & Debby Herbenick, *Preliminary Insights from a U.S. Probability Sample on Adolescents' Pornography Exposure, Media Psychology, and Sexual Aggression*, 26 J. Health Commc'n 39 (2021) (84.4% of males and 57% of females aged 14 to 18 exposed); Michael B. Robb & Supreet Mann, Common Sense Media, Teens and Pornography (2023) (average age of first exposure 12; 15% first exposed at age 10 or younger; 58% reported encountering pornography accidentally rather than by search).

Pornography is a major obstacle to every sort of happiness in a man's life, but its notorious short-circuiting of the human brain's dopamine release function is a key harm. *See* Simone Kühn & Jürgen Gallinat, *Brain Structure and Functional Connectivity Associated with Pornography Consumption*, 71 JAMA Psychiatry 827 (2014); Valerie Voon et al., *Neural Correlates of Sexual Cue Reactivity in Individuals with and Without Compulsive Sexual Behaviours*, 9 PLoS ONE e102419 (2014); Nora D. Volkow et al., *Addiction: Decreased Reward Sensitivity and Increased Expectation Sensitivity Conspire to Overwhelm the Brain's Control Circuit*, 32 BioEssays 748 (2010).

Gaming and online betting can also lead to significant negative effects on men, studies show, including financial stress, relationship breakdown, and mental health issues, all factors that can certainly affect a man's reading habits. Young men in particular are at a higher risk of developing gaming and gambling problems. *See, e.g.,* Kevin H. Chen, John L. Oliffe, and Mary T. Kelly, *Internet Gaming Disorder: An Emergent Health Issue for Men*, 12 Am. J. Mens Health 1151 (2018)(examining sex-based differences in gaming usage). And online gambling seems to have garnered both time and energy from men particularly. *See* Ioannidis, K. and Bowden-Jones, H. (2023), *Online gambling among young men: a rising tide?,* 14 Trends Urology & Men Health 6 (2023), https://doi.org/10.1002/tre.929 (while not naming a reading disincentive in particular, nonetheless noting harms to young men in particular from online gambling).

[50] *See* remarks notes 19-24.

[51] Masculinity and utility are often linked through the idea that a man's value comes from being useful—providing, protecting, fixing problems, enduring hardship, or remaining emotionally controlled. *See* Joseph A. Vandello and Jennifer K. Bosson, *Hard won and easily lost: A review and synthesis of theory and research on precarious manhood*, 14 Psychology of Men & Masculinity 101 (2013). https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029826.

[52] *See* Summers, note 46 (documenting male preference for nonfiction and for texts with male protagonists); *What Shapes Our Reading Preferences?*, EveryLibrary Action, Nov. 7 2023, https://action.everylibrary.org/what_shapes_our_reading_preferences (gender and age are the most influential factors shaping reading preference); *see also* remarks at notes 19-24.

[53] The same stories succeed with the same audience in visual form. Carr's debut was adapted into a Prime Video series that reached first position on the platform, and a prequel series followed. *See* notes 55, 60.

[54] Compare *Avengers: Endgame* (Marvel Studios 2019) (181 minutes), with Marc Brysbaert, *How Many Words Do We Read per Minute? A Review and Meta-Analysis of Reading Rate*, 109 J. Memory & Language 104047 (2019) (estimating average adult silent reading rates of 238 words per minute for nonfiction and 260 for fiction). At those rates a 120,000-word novel represents roughly eight hours of reading, several times the running time of a feature film.

[55] C.S. Lewis, *An Experiment In Criticism* 140-41 (Cambridge Univ. Press 1961).

[56] *See e.g.* Emily Bestler, https://editors.simonandschuster.com/editor/bestler-emily/ (noting her one guiding principle: "to find the very best commercial fiction and nonfiction across a wide range of categories and put these books into the hands of as many readers as possible").

[57] *Id*.

[58] *5 Q*s://www.littsburgh.com/5-questions-jack-carr-the-terminal-list/ (Carr recounting that he spent roughly a year and a half drafting the manuscript before submitting it to Emily Bestler at Emily Bestler Books in New York).

[59] Jack Carr, The Terminal List (Atria/Emily Bestler Books 2018).

[60] *True Believer* (2019), *Savage Son* (2020), *The Devil's Hand* (2021), *In the Blood* (2022), *Only the Dead* (2023), *Red Sky Mourning* (2024), *Cry Havoc* (2025), *The Fourth Option* (with M.P. Woodward) (2026)[list each book with its appropriate

so successful that it has spawned spinoffs written by Carr and a successful Amazon Prime television series.[61] [59, 60]

What explains this success? At the very least, Carr's stories represent traditionally masculine tastes and come very publicly from a traditionally masculine author.[62] [61, 62] *The Terminal List* universe is not couched merely in a veneer of masculinity but is driven forward by traditionally masculine virtues: a father's love for his family, yearning for justice, and brotherhood amongst warriors, to name a few.[63] [52] Men find these qualities relatable in any medium,[64] [63] and thus a James Reece story cannot be considered a waste of time when those male readers feel his thirst for justice for his family and his love for those he shared hardship with in war.[65] [34] Most importantly, it seems that each of these broad masculine values and experiences transcend time, place, and culture, which means, when expressed in fiction, that fictional work is a fundamentally literary experience. Carr is not just a writer of page-turners—he is an artist. Yet as an artist he seems to be forced by the publishing industry to form-fit his literary expression into a narrow marketing field: the Thriller genre.

In addition to this, male readers seem to also know instinctively that not all men understand these things, which is where Carr personally comes in. It would be one thing for a career author or academic to write these stories—it's another for an actual former Navy SEAL to, at least in the interpretive psyche of a modern male reader. Simply put, in their minds, he knows what he's talking about: he has full credibility, and is trustworthy.[66] That makes the investment worthwhile—he and his work pass the cost-benefit analysis. As evidence of this, popular ESPN host Pat McAfee recently hosted Carr on his afternoon show,[67] [64] and in his introduction, he made sure to caveat that even though Carr's stories didn't happen in real life, they are nonetheless worth reading.[68] Why would McAcfee feel the need to add that caveat? Likely because he innately understands the cost-benefit analysis we have described and which men may instinctively incorporate into their artistic consumption.

The final component to Carr's unique success seems to be his expertly tailored marketing of that traditional masculinity and its expression in the stories. Emily Bestler Books clearly understands and bolsters this: as at the time of writing, Jack Carr has 459,000 followers on Instagram[69] [65] and 267,000 followers on X.[70] [66] These are not numbers comparable with elite influencers, but considering the narrowness of the marketing lane for the Thriller genre and that Carr's primary product is within a generally unpopular medium, it is significant.[71] [9] On his accounts, particularly his Instagram (possibly because the platform is visually-driven), the user may find all sorts of traditionally masculine content intricately interwoven with his literary product: one reel might be about the various fiction that inspired Carr's work,[72] [65] while the next will be about historically significant weapons.[73] [65] Another post will be an anniversary of the birth or death of a famous writer,[74] [65] while another will be a post about Carr's latest trip to a gun range.[75] [65] And woven in are videos and pictures from Carr's personal library, taking up a whole wing of his family's home in Utah.[76] [65] The feed can be viewed essentially as a masterclass in niche marketing by connecting to

citation] Full citations: JACK CARR, TRUE BELIEVER (2019); JACK CARR, SAVAGE SON (2020); JACK CARR, THE DEVIL'S HAND (2021); JACK CARR, IN THE BLOOD (2022); JACK CARR, ONLY THE DEAD (2023); JACK CARR, RED SKY MOURNING (2024); JACK CARR, CRY HAVOC (2025); JACK CARR & M.P. WOODWARD, THE FOURTH OPTION (2026). All are published by Atria/Emily Bestler Books. Carr has also co-authored the nonfiction TARGETED: BEIRUT, and a further James Reece novel, STATE OF EXILE, is forthcoming from the same imprint. Note that *Cry Havoc* is a prequel following James Reece's father, Tom Reece, and *The Fourth Option* is set outside the Reece universe altogether.

[61]The Terminal List & The Terminal List: Dark Wolf, Amazon Prime Studios *The Terminal List* (Amazon Prime Video 2022) (starring Chris Pratt); *The Terminal List: Dark Wolf* (Amazon Prime Video 2025) (prequel series starring Taylor Kitsch, co-created by Carr).

[62]Carr served twenty years in Naval Special Warfare, rising from enlisted SEAL sniper to junior officer leading assault and sniper teams in Iraq and Afghanistan, to platoon commander conducting counterinsurgency in the southern Philippines, and finally to command of a special operations task unit in southern Iraq during the drawdown of U.S. forces. He retired from active duty in 2016, lives in Park City, Utah, and hosts the *Danger Close* podcast. See *Jack Carr*, SIMON & SCHUSTER, https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/State-of-Exile/Jack-Carr/Terminal-List/9781668047101 (last visited Aug. 19, 2026).

[63]See CARR, THE TERMINAL LIST, note 59; *The Terminal List*, OFFICIALJACKCARR.COM, https://www.officialjackcarr.com/books/the-terminal-list/ (last visited Aug. 19, 2026) (publisher's synopsis describing a protagonist who, having lost both his team and his family, applies more than a decade of constant warfare to avenging them).

[64]*See* note 54 and accompanying text. In the context of an advancing Germany in WWII, President Franklin D. Roosevelt encouraged reading among both soldiers and civilians, equating "books with weapons, and asserted that 'A war of ideas can no more be won without books than a naval war can be won without ships.' Just as Nazi Germany was trying to destroy the Allied armies, so too was it waging war on books and ideas. Soldiers needed weapons to fight on the battlefields but all Americans—civilians and those in uniform—had to be armed with books to effectively fight the war on ideas." Molly Guptill Manning, *Reading in Wartime*, Posterhouse.org, May 6, 2026, at https://posterhouse.org/blog/reading-in-wartime/.

[65]*See* Summers, note 46 (male readers' documented preference for action-driven narratives and male protagonists); Rodriguez, note 26 (thrillers as a genre originally written by, for, and about men).

[66]*See* note 62 and accompanying text, noting Carr's real life experience.

[67]*The Pat McAfee Show* (ESPN television broadcast Oct. 21, 2025) (interview with Jack Carr), archived at *Pat McAfee Show with Jack Carr*, OFFICIALJACKCARR.COM, https://www.officialjackcarr.com/pat-mcafee-show-with-jack-carr/ (last visited Aug. 19, 2026).

[68]*Id.*

[69] *See, e.g.*, Jack Carr (@jackcarrusa), INSTAGRAM, https://www.instagram.com/jackcarrusa?igsh=amk4czMxbWdtcDJi (last visited February 28, 2026).

[70]*See, e.g.,* Jack Carr (@JackCarrUSA), X, https://x.com/jackcarrusa?s=21 (last visited February 28, 2026).

[71]For scale, the National Endowment for the Arts estimated that only 27.7% of American men read a novel or short story in 2022. *Arts Participation Patterns in 2022*, *supra* note 8, at 5. Measured against the size of the fiction-reading male population, Carr's following is substantial.

[72] *See, e.g.*, Jack Carr (@jackcarrusa), INSTAGRAM, https://www.instagram.com/p/DaB0zAhGfR0/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==&igsi=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==.

[73] *Id.* at https://www.instagram.com/p/Da_CDwGZn2/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==&igsi=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==.

[74] *Id.* at https://www.instagram.com/p/DcGopSOlcQZ/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=NTc4MTIwNjQ2YQ==&igsi=NTc4MTIwNjQ2YQ==.

[75] *Id.* at https://www.instagram.com/reel/DYjUtlbJzVB/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==&igsi=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==.

[76] *Id.* at https://www.insta-

broadly shared values in the dominant mediums of our day.[77] [67] And at least one of the combined effects on the user may be that personal libraries can be both masculine and quite sophisticated. All of this is aside from Carr's appearances on other globally-popular new media productions, like *The Joe Rogan Experience* (also a male-centric audience).[78] [68-71]

One of the primary takeaways from any engagement with Jack Carr's books and media is that, in order to be a successful and masculine man in today's world, curated regular reading must be an integral part of a man's life, and a personal library reflects that.[79] If Mr. Darcy or Mr. Bennet were alive in 2026, their masculinity expressed in their libraries might indeed look a lot like Carr and his library.[80] [72] This phenomenon may offer hope for the restoration of male readership and bolster the suggestion that our society may be in a period of overcorrection: male literary engagement was not just a product of male domination of the literary industry, but is an expression of masculinity transcending history, and will survive until such a time as men and women are finally equally represented in the publishing industry. The path to doing so may lie in the local library, or as in Carr's case, in one's private library.

4. Building Your Generational Library: Solving Men and Reading

Mr. Darcy reminds readers of the magic of reading, and how it may be contained, reflected, and communicated by one's library when he emphatically states, "I cannot comprehend the neglect of a family library in such days as these."[81] [1] A person's library reflects his or her knowledge, interests, and character, and it implies that the books one owns provide insight into his or her mind and personality.[82] [73]

A library can also reveal a person's tastes and preferences, as the types of books one collects may indicate his or her values, interests, and intellectual pursuits.[83] [74] Historically libraries have been symbols of wealth and education,[84] [75] as Jane Austen is humorously working to convey.[85] [1] Indeed, Winston Churchill noted that "nothing makes a man more reverent than a library," highlighting the respect and humility that comes from engaging with literature.[86] [76] Pulitzer Prize novelist Geraldine Brooks stated, "To know a man's library is, in some measure, to know his mind," reinforcing the notion that libraries are windows into a person's thoughts and beliefs.[87] [77] If a man is truly known by his library, the size and content of that library can serve as a reflection of that individual's mind and character, illustrating the profound connection between reading and personal identity.[88] [78]

This then leads to the importance of creating a personal library. "A personal library is more than a collection of books: it is a door to knowledge and personal development."[89] [79] The next generation benefits from this strategy. "A two-year study found that having just one library at home improved children's academic achievement, language development, thinking and performance."[90] [79] Building this personal library requires a serious inventory of what the owner currently possesses, organizing that collection, then building that library, filling in the gaps by adding books that prepare the owner to understand missing corners of knowledge.[91] [79] Organizing that library is the next key. "Carefully organizing your books

gram.com/p/Db07vgYpxPW/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlOD-BiNWFlZA==&igsi=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==.

[77] *See* Ryan Steck, *Breaking: Jack Carr Steps Outside the James Reece Universe with His Latest Novel, 'The Fourth Option'*, THE REAL BOOK SPY, https://therealbookspy.substack.com/p/breaking-jack-carr-steps-outside (last visited Aug. 19, 2026) (describing Carr as sitting at the top of the thriller genre and noting the demands of his writing and media schedule alongside two simultaneous television productions).

[78] See, e.g., *The Joe Rogan Experience* #2390: Jack Carr (Oct. 8, 2025); *The Joe Rogan Experience* #2165: Jack Carr (June 2024); *The Joe Rogan Experience* #1986: Jack Carr (May 16, 2023); *The Joe Rogan Experience* #1820: Jack Carr (May 2022), described at *Joe Rogan Experience #1820 - Jack Carr*, OFFICIALJACKCARR.COM, https://www.officialjackcarr.com/joe-rogan-experience-1820-jack-carr/ (last visited Aug. 19, 2026).

[79] *Id*.

[80] For example, in Pamela Aiden's *Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman* series, Darcy's most enthusiastic reading occurs when he is so excited to read his recent book orders he rips open their packages with exuberance: *The Siege of Badajoz: A Chronological Narrative of Wellesley's Great Challenge*, and *Triumph at Fuentes de Onoro: Impressions of a Gentleman-Soldier.* PAMELA AIDEN, AN ASSEMBLY SUCH AS THIS, Ch. 7, at 99 (Touchstone Books 1993). But Darcy also considers a lady's reading as important too. *See* A LADY, *supra* note 1, at ch. 8 (where Darcy insists that a woman of accomplishment must improve her mind by extensive reading, while also deploring the neglect of a family library).

[81] Mr. Darcy's salient statement, A Lady, note 1, at Ch. 8 (tacitly referring to the English engagements in the Napoleonic Wars).

[82] T. R. Nalinadevi, *Role of Personal Libraries for Personal Knowledge and Personal Growth*, 12 J. RES. HUM. & SOC. SCI. 311(2024), 1204311313.pdf.

[83] Kristina Kulikauskienė and Laima Naujokienė, *Reading Habits and Preferences: The Context of Reader's Experience,* 27 PROF. STUD. THEORY & PRAC. 95 (2023), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372211109_READING_HABITS_AND_PREFERENCES_THE_CONTEXT_OF_READER'S_EXPERIENCE.

[84] Maria Papadouris, *How Libraries Stand the Test of Time*, JSTOR Daily, Aug. 21, 2025, https://daily.jstor.org/how-libraries-stand-the-test-of-time/.

[85] *See* notes 3-7, and the ensuing discussion. Great thinkers and leaders often had extensive libraries, showcasing their commitment to learning. On the use of books and libraries as markers of learning and status in Austen's fiction. *See* Halsey, note 7, and Dow, note 7.

[86] WINSTON CHURCHILL, A MAN OF DESTINY: WINSTON S. CHURCHILL (1965).

[87] GERALDINE BROOKS, MARCH (2005) (discussing moral struggles during the American Civil War).

[88] *See e.g.* Kimberly Huynh, *How Does Reading Shape Our Identity?* Beatrice Martin Foundation, Jan. 14, 2025, https://www.thebeatricemartinfoundation.org/news/how-does-reading-shape-our-identity.

[A]n increasing amount of research is showing that reading extensively shapes our identities. … reading gives us access to a variety of perspectives and stories, enabling us to experience lives that are different from our own. Reading opens up countless opportunities. As we immerse ourselves in each book, we add to our identity. Not only about the words on those pages, but also about how they can change the way we see, feel, act, and think about the world.

Id.

[89] T. R. Nalinadevi, *Role of Personal Libraries for Personal Knowledge and Personal Growth*, 12 J. RES. HUMAN. & SOC. SCI. 311 (2024), https://www.questjournals.org/jrhss/papers/vol12-issue4/1204311313.pdf.

Creating a personal library allows us to choose resources that align with our interests, preferences, and sense of wisdom. It provides insight into our curiosity and provides a platform for continuous learning and self-discovery and it has been proven that having books at home benefits children in many ways.

Id.

[90] *Id*. (a fact which takes nearly every parent's notice).

[91] *Id*. (noting that websites can also make book recommendations, but allowing for some "randomness" brings strength and beauty to the search).

is a great way to ensure you get the most out of your library…When you find a book easily, you will give or lend it to a friend."[92] [79]

"Creating a personal library doesn't just mean buying physical books. Explore a variety of formats including e-books, audiobooks and digital resources. Embrace the convenience and accessibility provided by digital platforms while enjoying the physical book experience. Use public resources: Public libraries are rich sources of information and education. Take advantage of their comprehensive collections, credit policies and resources beyond your budget. Public libraries foster a sense of community and provide opportunities to connect with like-minded people through book clubs and events."[93] [79, 80]

The power of a personal library can be truly transformative. "A personal library is more than a physical or digital collection; It fosters a love of learning, encourages intellectual curiosity, and provides constant inspiration."[94] [79] Curating one's own personal collection creates a personal intellectual hub that allows the library owner to seek knowledge, and deepen understanding."[95] [79] Again, building a personal library reflects one's identity.

"A personal library is more than just a collection of books—it is a reflection of your personality, values, and intellectual pursuits. It's a space where your passions come alive, and your identity finds expression in the stories, knowledge, and wisdom housed within. Building a personal library that truly represents who you are involves thoughtful curation, creativity, and an understanding of what inspires you."[96] [81]

Public libraries can aid this process by making the personal library owner's reading better.[97] [82] While reading preferences are shaped by many differing demographics, such as ethnicity, religion, race, and culture, gender and age are by far the most influential factors.[98] [82] And "no matter the medium, people appreciate being able to see themselves in the protagonists of their favorite stories and tend to gravitate toward these types of protagonists."[99] [82] Furthermore, when a reader can relate to a character, the reading is a much more engaging experience, "so communities with certain shared experiences will see increased popularity among books with protagonists who also share this experience."[100] [82]

These principles, when applied, can alter not just the library owner's experience, but the experiences of generations to follow. Engaging young people with reading fosters "lifelong, joyful readers. While each person constructs a unique reading identity and finds ways to sustain their reading habits, we can identify some commonalities in behaviors and attitudes across backgrounds and age groups."[101] [78, 82] Indeed, "True preferences come from wide reading. Sampling from many types of books increases students' knowledge of what's available and gives readers a better chance of finding topics and voices that resonate with them."[102] [83]

Concerns over male readership can be addressed from childhood. From reading about trains,[103] [84] to male friendships,[104] [85, 87] to sports,[105] [86] boys can and should learn to enjoy reading from an early age. Audio libraries can also work to spur the imagination, and explore new adventures.[106] [88] Furthermore, collectible books such as Folios and treasured editions can appeal to men in unique ways as well.[107] [89] A personal library can be a haven for personal growth, or a showcase of intellectual pursuits, but in any case it will certainly enhance its owner's reading.

Transcending mere book collection, building a personal library is a timeless endeavor that is about curating a sanctuary of knowledge, inspiration, and imagination.[108] [90, 91] A man's personal library becomes a living entity that grows and evolves with him, "encapsulating the stories and knowledge that shape" his unique narrative.[109] [90]

5. Conclusion

Men in Jane Austen's time were readers, a fact that is re-

[92] *Id*. (citing Howarth).

[93] *Id*. *See also* "Tips for Building a Personal Library: How to Curate and Organize Books," KhalishiPublishing, Dec. 15, 2024, at https://kharispublishing.com/kp/a-guide-to-building-your-personal-library/.

[94] Nalinadevi, note 82.

[95] *Id*. (allowing the library owner to unleash "creative potential in all its wisdom").

[96] Joy James, *How to Build a Personal Library That Reflects Your Identity*, BULB Nov. 17, 2024, https://www.bulbapp.io/p/6501e986-4d68-4681-81e2-a28c9a2fd5a1/how-to-build-a-personal-library-that-reflects-your-identity.

[97] *What Shapes Our Reading Preferences?* EveryLibrary Action, Nov. 7 2023, https://action.everylibrary.org/what_shapes_our_reading_preferences. "For example, a library with a large population of families with children will likely keep more picture books and basic chapter books in stock, while a library with a mostly adult population will carry a larger proportion of dense, more cerebral works." *Id*.

[98] *Id*.

[99] *Id*. "A complex, well-written character should be just as developed as a living, breathing human being, and with that complexity comes the same opinions, personality types, hidden fears, and motivations that people experience in their own lives." *Id*.

100 What Shapes Our Reading Preferences, note 90.

101 *Id*. *See also* Huynh, note 88.

102 Donalyn Miller, *Expanding Students' Reading Experiences by Valuing Their Preferences*, SCHOOL LIB. J., Nov. 16, 2020, https://www.slj.com/story/expanding-students-reading-experiences-by-valuing-their-preferences-donalyn-miller-libraries-books.

103 The popularity here of Thomas the Tank Engine cannot be understated. For a complete list of these books see *Thomas the Tank Engine Books*, Goodreads, https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/thomas-the-tank-engine (last visited Feb. 12, 2026).

104 Arnold Lobel's FROG AND TOAD series has influenced generations of readers. See *Frog and Toad's Decades-long Influence on Children's Books,* ICanRead.com, https://www.icanread.com/frog-and-toads-decades-long-influence-on-childrens-books/ (last visited Feb. 12, 2026).

105 For a good list of current sports books for boys see Reviews, *Our 10 Best Sports Books for Kids,* ONECLEARWINNER.COM, Feb 2026, https://reviews.oneclearwinner.com/product/sports-books-for-kids/?mscl-kid=adbb9ae7d0c316ed2b48f369c2131a30.

106 *See e.g*. Jennifer Michalowski, Learning with Audio Books, MIT, Apr. 9, 2026, https://bcs.mit.edu/news/learning-audiobooks.

107 *See, e.g*. Melissa Korn, *Rare Books are Booming*, WALL STREET JOURNAL, Aug. 22, 2026, https://www.wsj.com/articles/ais-need-for-content-has-put-rare-book-dealers-in-a-bind-1ac5a053. Mr. Bennet was quite disturbed by Mr. Collins careless handling his library's folios. A Lady, *supra* note 1, ch. 20.

108 *A Guide to Building Your Personal Library*, Kharis Pub., Dec. 15, 2023, https://kharispublishing.com/kp/a-guide-to-building-your-personal-library/.

109 *Id*.

flected in her work. Through her portrayals and characterizations of Mr. Darcy, Mr. Bingley and Mr. Bennet, [110] [1] Colonel Brandon and John Willoughby,[111] [2] Captain Benwick,[112] [3] even Edward Ferrars[113] [2] and Mr. Collins (though a bit less desirable as readers), [114] [1] Austen conveyed that a man is known by his library and what he reads.

This essay has worked to offer insight on the contemporary library and the perplexing world of men and reading. While Mr. Bennet sequesters himself from his world of women in his beloved library, [115] [1] he seems to use his literary surroundings as an educational comfort as well as a much-needed escape. He is a man who reads, as is Mr. Darcy, and men who read can be very attractive. After all, a man is known by his library.[116] [7]

Author Contributions

Joseph Kohm III: Conceptualization, Investigation, Resources, Visualization, Writing – original draft

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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[5] *Pride and Prejudice*, Movie (2005) (Joe Wright).

[6] Katie Halsey, Jane Austen and Her Readers, 1786-1945 (Anthem Press 2013).

[7] Brett & Kate McKay, *The Libraries, Studies, and Writing Rooms of 15 Famous Men*, Oct. 6, 2023, https://www.artofmanliness.com/character/knowledge-of-men/famous-libraries-studies-writing-rooms/

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110 *See* A Lady, note 1, at Ch. 1.

111 *See generally* A LADY, SENSE AND SENSIBILITY (1814)(both readers of Shakespeare's Sonnets).

112 *See generally* JANE AUSTEN, PERSUASION (1817)(the British Naval character who lost himself in melancholy poetry).

113 *See generally* A LADY, SENSE AND SENSIBILITY (1814)(noting his poor reading style, at least according to Marianne.

114 *See generally* A Lady, note 1 (known for his desire to read aloud Fordyce's Sermons, the full title of which is "Sermons to Young Women").

115 A Lady, note 1, at Ch. 1. It is worth noting that women readers in Austen relish "The Novel" ala Isabelle Thorpe and Catherine Moreland in Northanger Abbey, Austen note 45, and Mr. Darcy heartily approves of a woman's reading as he expressed so clearly that a woman of accomplishment must "thoroughly improve her mind by reading." A Lady, note 1, at ch. 34.

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