



FINANCIAL PREPAREDNESS

"One of life's most painful moments comes when we must admit that we didn't do our homework, that we are not prepared." ~ Merlin Olsen

Issue #69
June 3, 2022

Book Collecting

Note: This is the second time I've written about books. If you missed the first time, you can read it [here](#). Also check out the documentary "[The Booksellers](#)."

Books are the carriers of civilization. Without books, history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled, thought and speculation at a standstill. ~ Henry David Thoreau

My name is Rob and I'm an addict. My vice (or is it a virtue?) is discovering, cataloging, ordering, reading and sharing books. I love them! As a curious lifelong learner who wants to know more about so many different subjects, I covet, devour and savor them. My family just rolls their eyes at the stacks of unread books around our house, or when new books arrive in the mail (which is almost every day). There are worse faults than being a bibliophile.

How to Discover New Books

- Once you create a library on [LibraryThing](#) and start rating books you've read, it will start making automatic recommendations (which are pretty good) every few days or so. These can be found on the main page (scroll down).

- If you order books from Amazon, it will make some (very good) recommendations on its website. Go to Books > Top Picks for You.
- If you have Amazon's Kindle app on your phone, go to Discover for some pretty good recommendations.
- Most other websites that sell books (see below) usually have at least pretty good automatic recommendations based on what you're buying or what you've bought in the past.
- Many books will mention or recommend other books, including in footnotes or a bibliography.
- Ask your reader friends for recommendations.



How to Evaluate a Book

First I look at who the author was and when was the book published and how many pages it has (I tend to avoid books with less than 100 pages). I want to know about the author's background and what other books they've written. Sites like Amazon, LibraryThing and ThriftBooks have good author's pages and reviews. Sometimes some of the reviews on Amazon can be fake, so I use FakeSpot.com to see how legit they are. Amazon Kindle allows you to download a sample.

How to Catalog Your Books

Use LibraryThing. See [Issue #9](#). You can customize the page view of each collection you

create. For my To Read collection, the columns at the top are (in this order) Title (with a customizable thumbnail image of each book), Publication (publisher, year and number of pages), Date (year of publication, in case the Publication column doesn't have it), Author, Collections (e.g., To Read, Read, etc.), Average Rating, Tags (e.g., Finance, History, etc.), Comments, Private Comments, Inventory and Entry Date. I use the Comments column to help me prioritize what to read next, with 1 being the highest priority and 4 being the lowest. I use the Private Comments column to make notes, such as "PDF," "available 7/1/22," "rare," "very expensive," "Kindle price," "want the 2021 edition," "mixed reviews" or "TB" (if I've added it to my wish list on ThriftBooks). The Inventory column allows you to keep track of what you own with a red, gray or green light. Every column is sortable, and there's a search field at the top right. It is extremely powerful and I highly recommend it if you're a serious bibliophile with an extensive library and To Read list.

How should you organize the books you already own? I organize mine based first on read vs. unread (usually in separate rooms/bookshelves), then by broad subject. If you're meticulous, you could then organize by author and/or publication date. This is an ongoing battle, and you may find that you are running out of room. Hint: If you ditch a TV, you can convert that space into more bookshelves, like I did in two places.



How to Buy Books

I want to own books because (1) their value will never go to zero like the U.S. dollar, and in fact may appreciate significantly, (2) they are difficult to censor, tax, or remove/confiscate, (3) they are a resilient form of knowledge that could be used to help get you through a crisis, preserve the historical record, or reboot civilization after a crisis, (4) if you're a parent, you want to have an enriching environment for your kids, and (5) thieves aren't interested in them.



I look for hardcover books (especially if they're over ~120 pages) in Very Good (no writing or highlighting), Like New or New condition. If you ever order a book in one of these conditions and it has writing or highlighting in it, if you let the seller know, they will almost always give you a refund. I avoid ex-library books since these have protective covers on them that are often very difficult to remove without damaging the book.

It's generally a good idea to not spend so much money on books that you have enough left to pay your mortgage, so you want to maximize your book bang per buck. Buying books is a lot like investing in value stocks: You need to be patient, be willing to buy things that are less than perfect (but are a good value), and back up the truck when they're on sale.

One of the best places to buy used books is at a [book sale](#). Usually you can get a hardcover book in Very Good or Like New condition for about \$2. Your local Goodwill or public library used bookstore may have a decent selection as well.



When I want to find a book online (or see what the market for it is like), I go to BookFinder.com, which is absolutely key, as it shows the best prices from most online sellers as well as the condition of each book (unfortunately, you can't narrow your search to say Very Good condition or better). You can narrow your search by ISBN, author, publication year, new or used, and binding type (note [the difference between trade paperback and mass market paperback](#)). This is a very powerful search engine, though beware of the "summary" books. Often AbeBooks (which is owned by Amazon) has the best selection and lowest price. Apparently, ThriftBooks' prices aren't shown on BookFinder, although sometimes another vendor such as Amazon will show a book that ThriftBooks has, almost always for a lower price than the one on ThriftBooks' own website.



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You will definitely want to create an account and join ThriftBooks' [ReadingRewards](#) program (it's free). The more books you've bought from them during the last year, the more points you're awarded, and they can add up quickly to free books (\$7 or less). You also get free shipping if your order is for at least \$15. They often have sales where they reward more points; the best are around the big holidays.



One online bookstore you should check out is [Book Depository](#), which is based in the UK. Apparently they don't sell used books, and generally their prices are high, but oftentimes they will have the lowest price on the more obscure newly published paperback books, especially since they don't collect sales tax and offer free worldwide shipping. Their prices are listed on BookFinder. They also have a decent Wishlist, but it needs to be renewed periodically.

The online seller with perhaps the most thoughtful and well done website is [Biblio.com](#). I think they have a lot of potential, but they don't seem to have much of an inventory and they seem to be repositioning themselves as primarily a seller of collectible books. Their website has some good information about [book collecting](#). They're currently having an online [antiquarian book fair](#) through June 4.

How to Devour/Savor a Book

The most important consideration is you need to read something that you're in the mood for *at that moment* (which is why I have dozens of books going at any time), when you are mentally alert, and when you have some time to sit in a quiet place and read undisturbed. I often wake up very early and do some personal growth reading for half an hour while my family is still asleep; it's a great way to start the day.

I also recommend a good [bookstand](#), [highlighters](#), [page markers](#), [bookmarks](#) and [reading lamp](#).

How to Share a Book

If you're the parent of a child, the best way to share a book is to read it to your child(ren). This will set a good example and allow you to spend time learning something new together. Your child will be exposed to new words--how they're pronounced, what they mean and how they're used in a sentence. Reading daily to your child is one of the greatest long-term gifts you can give them.

You can also loan a book to someone or buy them a copy if a book really impressed you. When I receive a graduation announcement from someone, I send them a great book!

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I would love to hear from you! I thrive on feedback from readers. If you have any comments, suggestions, insight/wisdom, or you'd like to share a link to a great article, please [email me](#).

Generally, I don't have time to answer questions about your specific situation, but if you have a general question that I think other readers also have, [let me know](#) and I will provide an answer in a future issue.

Feel free to forward this to a friend. If you would like to subscribe (it's free!) or unsubscribe, [email me](#) with either "subscribe" or "unsubscribe" in the subject line.

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Investments carry risk, are not guaranteed, and do fluctuate in value, and you can lose your entire investment. Past performance is not indicative of future performance. You should not invest in something you don't understand, or put all of your eggs in one basket.

Before starting a new diet or exercise regimen, you should consult with a doctor, nutritionist, dietician, or personal trainer.

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