

HICSS Book Club * Jan 7, 2019

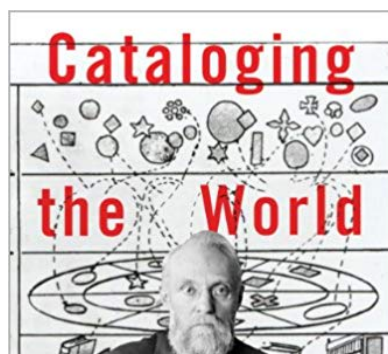
Wailea, Maui, HI * Humu Humu restaurant at Grand Wailea



Book club (L-R): Kate Solomonson, Tom Erickson, Mike Shepherd, Carolyn Watters, Dan Russell

A few of the HICSS folks got together to talk about books. Here's what they nominated as their favorite books for the past year.

Dan: [Cataloging the World](#) Alex Wright



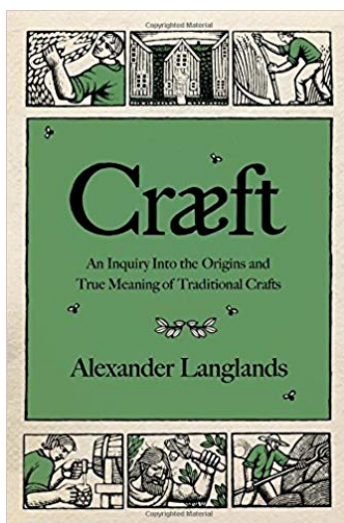
The dream of capturing and organizing knowledge is as old as history. From the archives of ancient Sumeria and the Library of Alexandria to the Library of Congress and Wikipedia, humanity

has wrestled with the problem of harnessing its intellectual output. The timeless quest for wisdom has been as much about information storage and retrieval as creative genius.

Cataloging the World introduces us to a figure who stands out in the long line of thinkers and idealists who devoted themselves to the task. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, Paul Otlet, a librarian by training, worked at expanding the potential of the catalog card, the world's first information chip. From there followed universal libraries and museums, connecting his native Belgium to the world by means of a vast intellectual enterprise that attempted to organize and code everything ever published. Forty years before the first personal computer and fifty years before the first browser, Otlet envisioned a network of "electric telescopes" that would allow people everywhere to search through books, newspapers, photographs, and recordings, all linked together in what he termed, in 1934, a *réseau mondial*--essentially, a worldwide web.

(Little did I know when I suggested this that *everyone* at the table had some story about Otlet and/or R. V. Raganathan!)

Tom: [Cræft: An Inquiry Into the Origins and True Meaning of Traditional Crafts](#) Alex Langlands.



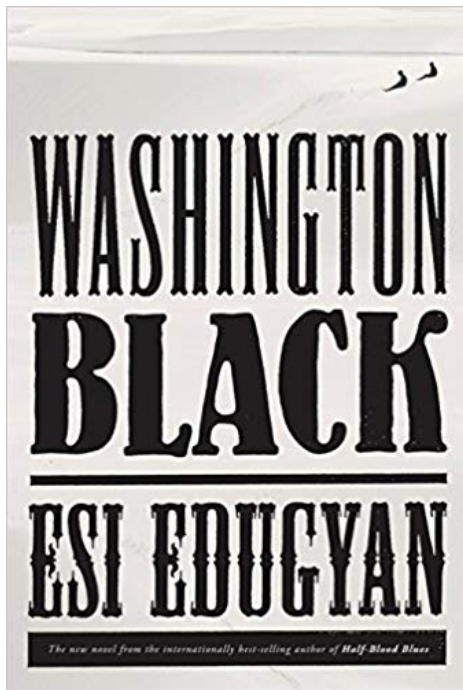
Langlands is a UK architect, a reconstructor / re-enactor. He's in a BBC TV series "[Life on a Period Farm](#)"

We find ourselves nostalgic for products bearing the mark of authenticity—hand-made furniture, artisan breads, craft beers, and other goods produced by human hands. What often goes unnoticed is the transformation of our understanding of craft—or rather, *cræft*—in the wake of industrialization.

In *Cræft*, archaeologist and medieval historian Langlands argues that our modern understanding of craft only skims the surface. His journeys from his home in Wales have taken him along the Atlantic seaboard of Europe, from Spain through France and England to Scotland and Iceland in search of the lost meaning of craft. Reaching as far back as the Neolithic period, he combines deep history with scientific analyses and personal anecdotes. We follow the author as he herds sheep, keeps bees, tans hides, spins wool, and thatches roofs. We learn that scythes work much better on tall grass than the latest model of weed trimmers, that you can spin wool using a large wooden spoon, and that it was once considered criminal to work on animal hides before a requisite twelve-month soak.

When it first appeared in Old English, the word *craft* signified an indefinable sense of knowledge, wisdom, and resourcefulness. Rediscovering craft will connect us with our human past, our sense of place, and our remarkable capacity to survive in the harshest of landscapes..

Katie: [George Washington Black](#) Edi Edugyan



The author is from Victoria, BC! Great historical fiction. Katie admires her telling of the experience and its materiality.

George Washington Black, or "Wash," an eleven-year-old field slave on a Barbados sugar plantation, is terrified to be chosen by his master's brother as his manservant. To his surprise, the eccentric Christopher Wilde turns out to be a naturalist, explorer, inventor, and abolitionist. Soon Wash is initiated into a world where a flying machine can carry a man across the sky, where even a boy born in chains may embrace a life of dignity and meaning--and where two people, separated by an impossible divide, can begin to see each other as human. But when a man is killed and a bounty is placed on Wash's head, Christopher and Wash must abandon everything. What follows is their flight along the eastern coast of America, and, finally, to a remote outpost in the Arctic. What

brings Christopher and Wash together will tear them apart, propelling Wash even further across the globe in search of his true self. From the blistering cane fields of the Caribbean to the frozen Far North, from the earliest aquariums of London to the eerie deserts of Morocco, *Washington Black* tells a story of self-invention and betrayal, of love and redemption, of a world destroyed and made whole again, and asks the question, What is true freedom?

Mike: [A Gentleman in Moscow](#) Amoré Towles



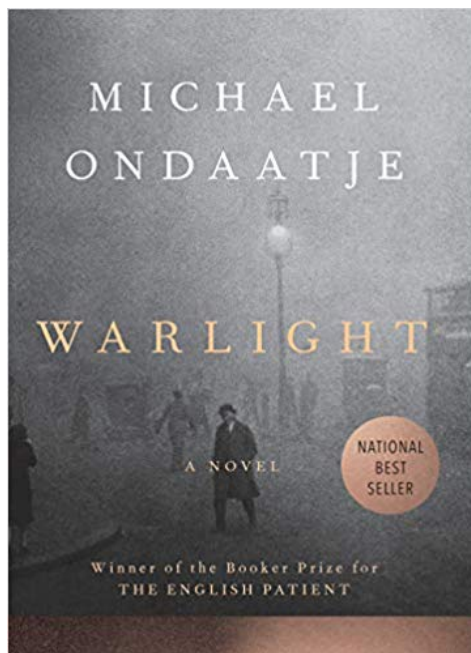
From the New York Times bestselling author of *Rules of Civility*—a transporting novel about a man who is ordered to spend the rest of his life inside a luxury hotel.

In 1922, Count Alexander Rostov is deemed an unrepentant aristocrat by a Bolshevik tribunal, and is sentenced to house arrest in the Metropol, a grand hotel across the street from the Kremlin. Rostov, an indomitable man of erudition and wit, has never worked a day in his life, and must now live in an attic room while some of the most tumultuous decades in Russian history are unfolding outside the hotel's doors. Unexpectedly, his reduced circumstances provide him entry into a much larger world of emotional discovery.

Brimming with humor, a glittering cast of characters, and one beautifully rendered scene after another, this singular novel casts a spell as it relates the count's endeavor to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to be a man of purpose.

Soon to be a major television series starring Kenneth Branagh.

Carolyn: [War Light](#). Michael Ondaatje

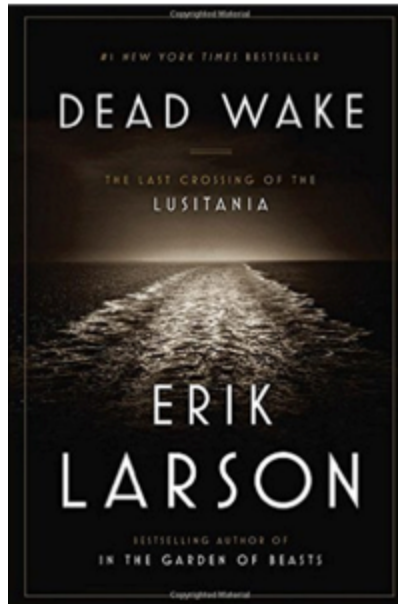


Carolyn describes this as an interesting hindsight view of memory. Two kids with personal histories and memories... how are their memories reconstructed? (What is the truth of our memories?) This is the story of fourteen-year-old Nathaniel, and his older sister, Rachel. In 1945, just after World War II, they stay behind in London when their parents move to Singapore, leaving them in the care of a mysterious figure named The Moth. They suspect he might be a criminal, and they grow both more convinced and less concerned as they come to know his eccentric crew of friends: men and women joined by a shared history of unspecified service during the war, all of whom seem, in some way, determined now to protect, and educate (in rather unusual ways) Rachel and Nathaniel. But are they really what and who they claim to be? And what does it mean when the siblings' mother returns after months of silence without their father, explaining nothing, excusing

nothing? A dozen years later, Nathaniel begins to uncover all that he didn't know and understand in that time, and it is this journey--through facts, recollection, and imagination--that he narrates in this masterwork from one of the great writers of our time.

ROUND 2--Everyone tells us their second favorite book... In 90 seconds!

Dan: *Dead Wake: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania* (2015) Erik Larson



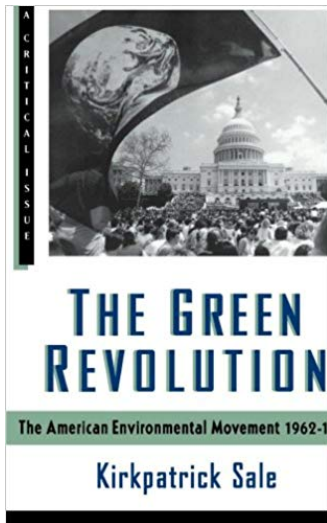
On May 1, 1915, with WWI entering its tenth month, a luxury ocean liner as richly appointed as an English country house sailed out of New York, bound for Liverpool, carrying a record number of children and infants. The passengers were surprisingly at ease, even though Germany had declared the seas around Britain to be a war zone. For months, German U-boats had brought terror to the North Atlantic. But the Lusitania was one of the era's great transatlantic "Greyhounds"—the fastest liner then in service—and her captain, William Thomas Turner, placed tremendous faith in the gentlemanly strictures of warfare that for a century had kept civilian ships safe from attack.

Germany, however, was determined to change the rules of the game, and Walther Schwieger, the captain of Unterseeboot-20, was happy to oblige. Meanwhile, an ultra-secret British intelligence unit tracked Schwieger's U-boat, but told no one. As U-20 and the Lusitania made their way toward Liverpool, an array of forces both grand and achingly small—hubris, a chance fog, a closely guarded secret, and more—all converged to produce one of the great disasters of history.

It is a story that many of us think we know but don't, and Erik Larson tells it thrillingly, switching between hunter and hunted while painting a larger portrait of America at the height of the Progressive Era. Full of glamour and suspense, *Dead Wake* brings to life a cast of evocative characters, from famed Boston bookseller Charles Lauriat to pioneering female architect Theodate Pope to President Woodrow Wilson, a man lost to grief, dreading the widening war but also captivated by the prospect of new love.

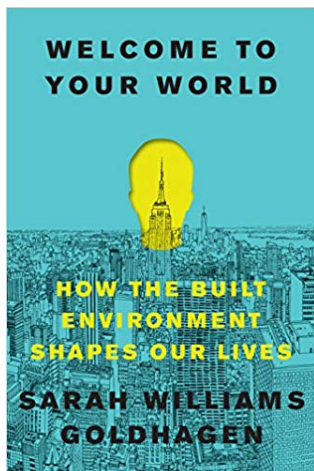
Gripping and important, *Dead Wake* captures the sheer drama and emotional power of a disaster whose intimate details and true meaning have long been obscured by history.

Tom: [The Green Revolution](#) David Montgomery



The Green Revolution documents the tremendous change in public awareness and attitudes since the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. Sale assesses the growth of national environmental organizations and the influence of scientists and their theories about global warming, the greenhouse effect, acid rain, toxic waste, and biodiversity. And he shows how environmental concerns affect all levels of society and much of our government's legislative and regulatory work.

Katie: [Welcome to Your World: How the built environment shapes our lives](#) Sarah Williams Goldhagen



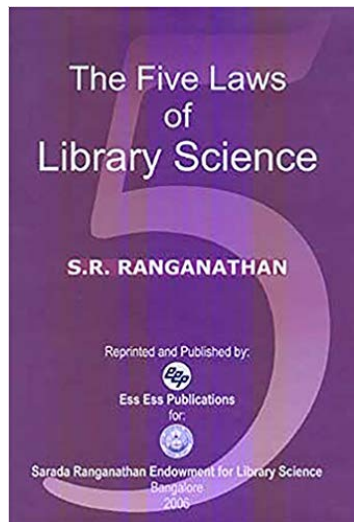
One of the nation's chief architecture critics reveals how the environments we build profoundly shape our feelings, memories, and well-being, and argues that we must harness this knowledge to construct a world better suited to human experience.

Taking us on a fascinating journey through some of the world's best and worst landscapes, buildings, and cityscapes, Sarah Williams Goldhagen draws from recent research in cognitive neuroscience and psychology to demonstrate how people's experiences of the places they build are central to their well-being, their physical health, their communal and social lives, and even their very sense of themselves. From this foundation, Goldhagen presents a powerful case that societies must use this knowledge to rethink what and how they build: the world needs better-designed, healthier environments that address the complex range of human individual and social needs.

By 2050 America's population is projected to increase by nearly seventy million people. This will necessitate a vast amount of new construction—almost all in urban areas—that will dramatically transform our existing landscapes, infrastructure, and urban areas. Going forward, we must do everything we can to prevent the construction of exhausting, overstimulating environments and enervating, understimulating ones. Buildings, landscapes, and cities must both contain and spark associations of natural light, greenery, and other ways of being in landscapes that humans have evolved to need and expect. Fancy exteriors and

dramatic forms are never enough, and may not even be necessary; authentic textures and surfaces, and careful, well-executed construction details are just as important.

Mike: [The Five Laws of Library Science](#) S. R. Ranganathan



S. R. Ranganathan, considered by librarians all over the world to be the father of modern library science, proposed five laws of library science in the early 1930s. Most librarians worldwide accept them as the foundations of the philosophy of their work and service in the library. These laws are: Books are for use, Every reader his or her book, Every book its reader, Save the time of the reader, and The library is a growing organism. The Five Laws of Library Science are some of the most influential concepts in the field. Since they were published in 1931, these five laws "have remained a centerpiece of professional values..." (Rubin 2004). These basic theories of Library Science continue to directly impact the development of this discipline and the service of all libraries.

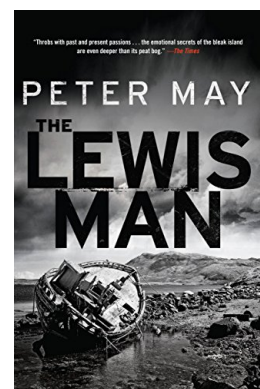
Carolyn: [The Lewis Man: The Lewis Trilogy](#) Peter May

As Carolyn says, "the story he tells is not the one you end up with."

Three books: The Lewis Man; Black House; Chess Men. It is the story of Fin Macleod and his homecoming to the Isle of Lewis, part of the Hebrides. In the process of solving a murder in each of the stories, Fin has to come to terms with his past and decide what to do in the present to improve his future.

The trilogy is a rich blend of place description, history and culture and each book focuses on various social and cultural issues. There is love, loss, nostalgia and heartbreak in these stories as well as mystery and suspense.

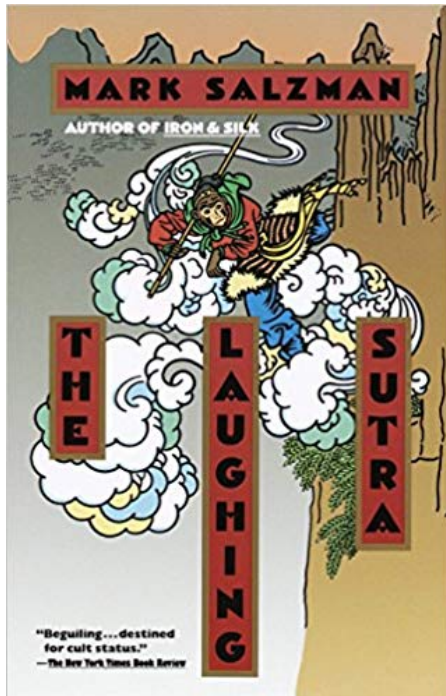
It is recommended that the trilogy be read in sequence.



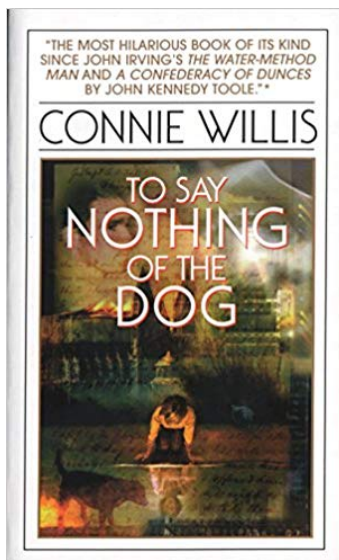
ROUND 3--Everyone tells us the funniest book they ever read.

Dan: [The Laughing Sutra](#) Mark Salzman

The Laughing Sutra follows the adventures of Hsun-ching, a naive but courageous orphan, and the formidable and mysterious Colonel Sun, who together travel from mainland China to San Francisco, risking everything to track down an elusive Buddhist scripture called The Laughing Sutra. Part Tom Sawyer, part Tom Jones, The Laughing Sutra draws us into an irresistible narrative of danger and comedy that speaks volumes about the nature of freedom and the meaning of loyalty. (Dan: It's hysterical!)



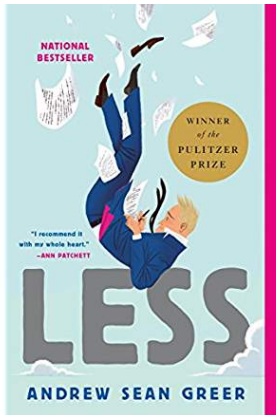
Tom: [To Say Nothing of the Dog](#) Connie Willis.



Historians using time travel to investigate history...Ned Henry is badly in need of a rest. He's been shuttling between the 21st century and the 1940s searching for a Victorian atrocity called the bishop's bird stump. It's part of a project to restore the famed Coventry Cathedral, destroyed in a Nazi air raid over a hundred years earlier.

But then Verity Kindle, a fellow time traveler, inadvertently brings back something from the past. Now Ned must jump back to the Victorian era to help Verity put things right—not only to save the project but to prevent altering history itself.

Katie: [Less](#) Andrew Grier



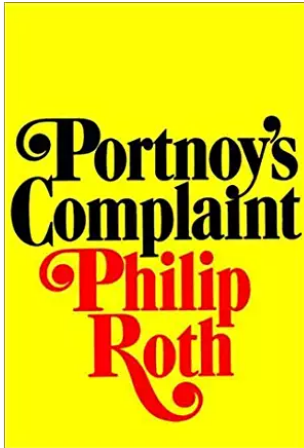
Pulitzer Award winner. Who says you can't run away from your problems? You are a failed novelist about to turn fifty. A wedding invitation arrives in the mail: your boyfriend of the past nine years is engaged to someone else. You can't say yes--it would be too awkward--and you can't say no--it would look like defeat. On your desk are a series of invitations to half-baked literary events around the world.

What would possibly go wrong? Arthur Less will almost fall in love in Paris, almost fall to his death in Berlin, barely escape to a Moroccan ski chalet from a Saharan sandstorm, accidentally book himself as the (only) writer-in-residence at a Christian Retreat Center in Southern India, and encounter, on a desert island in the Arabian Sea, the last person on Earth he wants to face. Somewhere in there: he will turn fifty. Through it all, there is his first love. And there is his last.

Because, despite all these mishaps, missteps, misunderstandings and mistakes, Less is, above all, a love story.

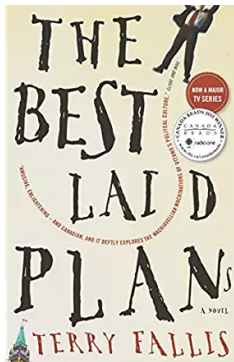
Mike: [Portnoy's Complaint](#). Phillip Roth

It might not seem like a comedy to YOU, but to Mike, this novel rang all too true.. And too funny (if you've lived this experience).



Carolyn: [Best Laid Plans](#) Terry Fallis

But before discussing her book, Carolyn wants to point out that for REAL laughter, read ANYTHING by P.G. Wodehouse. (Jeeves is eternally funny!) But this one is good too!



This is fairly Canadian, but here goes... The set up: A burnt-out political aide quits just before an election--but is forced to run a hopeless campaign on the way out. He makes a deal with a crusty old Scot, Angus McLintock--an engineering professor who will do anything, *anything*, to avoid teaching English to engineers--to let his name stand in the election. No need to campaign, certain to lose, and so on.

Then a great scandal blows away his opponent, and to their horror, Angus is elected. He decides to see what good an honest M.P. who doesn't care about being re-elected can do in Parliament. The results are hilarious--and with chess, a hovercraft, and the love of a good woman thrown in, this very funny book has something for everyone.