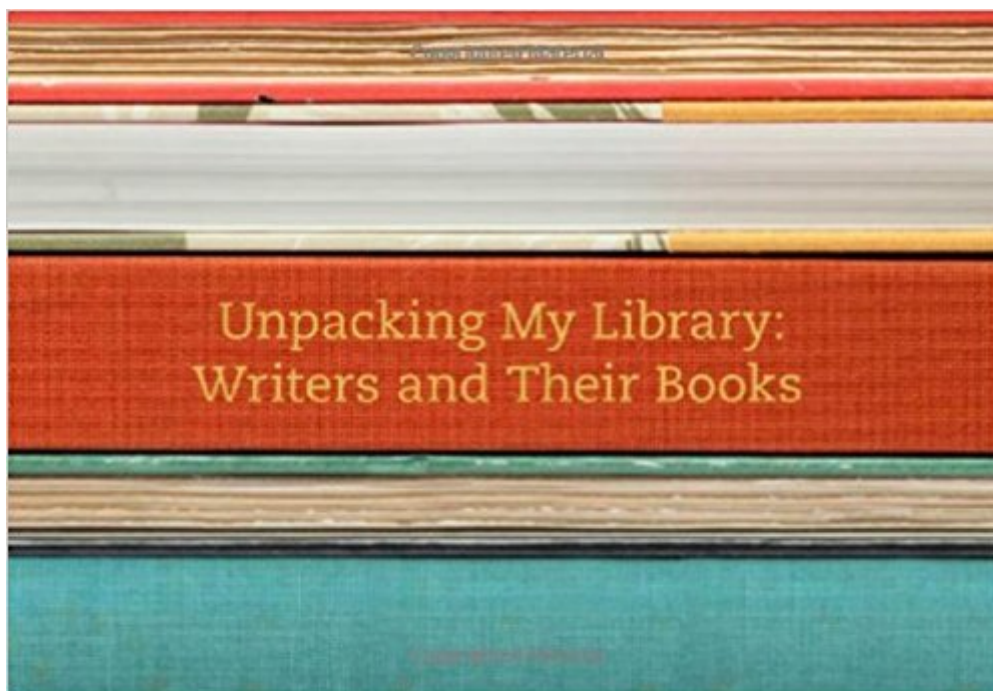


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# Unpacking My Library: Writers And Their Books



## Synopsis

As words and stories are increasingly disseminated through digital means, the significance of the book as object—whether pristine collectible or battered relic—is growing as well. *Unpacking My Library: Writers and Their Books* spotlights the personal libraries of thirteen favorite novelists who share their collections with readers. Stunning photographs provide full views of the libraries and close-ups of individual volumes: first editions, worn textbooks, pristine hardcovers, and childhood companions. In her introduction, Leah Price muses on the history and future of the bookshelf, asking what books can tell us about their owners and what readers can tell us about their collections. Supplementing the photographs are Price's interviews with each author, which probe the relation of writing to reading, collecting, and arranging books. Each writer provides a list of top ten favorite titles, offering unique personal histories along with suggestions for every bibliophile. *Unpacking My Library: Writers and Their Books* features the personal libraries of Alison Bechdel, Stephen Carter, Junot Díaz, Rebecca Goldstein and Steven Pinker, Lev Grossman and Sophie Gee, Jonathan Lethem, Claire Messud and James Wood, Philip Pullman, Gary Shteyngart, and Edmund White.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In its beautiful design, *Unpacking My Library* is itself an argument for the continuing vitality of physical books and the libraries that contain them. "The Boston Globe (The Boston Globe)" Filled

with juicy details about how writers read, collect, and live with their books." "Jean Tamarin, The Chronicle of Higher Education (Jean Tamarin The Chronicle of Higher Education) Winner of the 2012 New York Book Show Award in General Trade Jacket, as given by the New York Book Show (Jacket Cover Design Prize New York Book Show)" "[M]any of the observations may help disorganized book nuts bring some shape to the mishmash of books we call our own libraries." "Alan Bisbort, The Sunday Republican (Alan Bisbort The Sunday Republican)" "Unpacking My Library is a wild, wide world of authors and their books. Maul it savagely or gently caress it." "Fine Books & Collections (Fine Books & Collections)" "There are many expensive coffee table books about books and libraries, but for a relatively modest cost, Price's volume offers a gorgeous set of pictures . . . [a] lovely book." "Harvey Freedenberg, Harrisburg Magazine (Harvey Freedenberg Harrisburg Magazine)" "[A] sensual pleasure for the eyes, and a book fans of the writers, and of books and libraries, will enjoy." "Jeff Bursey, Rain Taxi (Jeff Bursey Rain Taxi)

Leah Price is professor of English at Harvard University. She is the author of *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel*, *Literary Secretaries/Secretarial Culture*, and *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain*. She writes on old and new media for the *New York Times Book Review*, the *London Review of Books*, and the *Boston Globe*.

As soon as this book arrived I devoured it in one pleasure filled sitting. I'm a booklover and a book voyeur. After arriving at someone's home I say 'hello' and attempt to surreptitiously peruse the titles on their shelves. What better way to get a taste for who they are. In this small book editor Leah Price interviews thirteen contemporary writers, some better known than others. What are their earliest memories of books? When did they begin to buy books? How do they organize their libraries? Do they dispose of unwanted books and if so how? Each author selects their ten favorite books. However, what is most interesting are the photos of their bookshelves in all their disarray. (You will no longer feel guilty about your own sloppy shelves.) The reader gets to be a voyeur (you may need a magnifying glass to assist with this) and see who owns what. The biggest surprise to me is that I saw few art books on their shelves and none on music. If you are a booklover spend a couple of hours with this delightful book. If you know a booklover this would make an outstanding gift.

The narrative that accompanied each writer's library photos was repetitive and often too obscure to

be of much use to the general reader. I appreciated that most of them were extreme collectors who loved their books, but, like many book collectors, their reasons for their selections were elusive. I would have liked to know more about which books actually aided them in their own writing.

I was interested in what others do with their books....displaying, arranging, saving, discarding and reading them. Their 10 favorite books were surprising....very few reads after 1990. A fine selection of accomplished writers.

What better than browsing an intelligent reader's shelf? How enticing o not just see but also get annotations of the shelf. I got many great books from their choices. Thank you!

Thanks

Less than expected for such a rich territory.

If you are a vicarious library lover or just the least bit curious about the lives of authors, this book is a real treat. Not only do you get an interview with each of the writers whose libraries are pictured, but you also learn what their ten favorite books are. I keep this book in easy reach -- along with "At Home with Books" and other library-related volumes-- and have picked it up too many times to count. if I have a criticism, it is only that I wished the book included more writers. I'd gladly supply a list of the writers' libraries I'd like to see in the next volume!

Not worth wasting time with, unless (like me) you have a huge number of books and don't know how best to shelve them. Some good ideas here, albeit expensive. Pleasant to know that some authors who can afford custom--made shelves are buying off-the-rack stuff. Not Claire Messud and James Wood, but they don't need to.

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