

Why the Smartest People Have Tons of Unread Books

By Julia Smith



Legendary Italian writer, Umberto Eco, owned a personal library with a staggering 30,000 books, and he separated visitors into two categories:

Those who ask, "Wow! How many of these books have you read?" and those who understand — that's not the point.

If you're a reader like me, you probably have an ever-growing stack of books beside your bed that you haven't read yet. Or better yet — shelves and shelves full of unread books.

It's like they multiply on their own! Every time you read one, three more take its place.

It's nothing to feel guilty over — especially if you're a writer.

In fact, having a lot of unread books puts you in the same club as some of the smartest, most successful people in the world. People like Stephen King, Jay Walker, Bill Gates ... and even copywriting legends like Mark Ford and Bob Bly.

That's because the books you haven't read can actually be **more valuable** than the books you have read.

In his book, *The Black Swan*, Nassim Taleb explains how we should build a relationship with books and knowledge:

*"The library should contain as much of what you **do not know** as your financial means allow you to put there. You will accumulate more knowledge and more books as you grow older ... **Indeed, the more you know, the larger the rows of unread books.**"*

But why is that?

All those unread books sitting around your house aren't just collecting dust ... they're acting as a powerful reminder ...

A reminder of everything you don't know ... and all the amazing things you can still discover.

That's why some of the most brilliant minds in the world keep shelves and shelves of unread books around them. There's no better inspiration than seeing the infinite possibilities laid out in front of you.

So when you find yourself surrounded by ever-multiplying books ... and let's face it, you would need a hundred lifetimes to get to them all ... don't be discouraged.

Instead, remember to see your library for what it is — a research tool full of *endless* possibilities.

Every Writer Should Also Be a Reader

Of course, Stephen King also famously said, "If you don't have time to read, you don't have the time (or the tools) to write. Simple as that."

So it helps to make sure your library is stocked with the books every writer should read. Here are just a few ...

- *Elements of Style* by Strunk & White — One of the best guides on how to tighten your writing, *Elements of Style* will teach you how to make your writing "disappear" so your message can shine through to your reader.
- *The Copywriter's Handbook* by Bob Bly — With decades of experience in the direct-response market and more than 90 published books under his belt, Bob Bly has compiled everything you need to know to be a successful copywriter into this volume.
- *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell — Give your writing career a special edge by injecting some fundamental marketing know-how into your arsenal of skills. *The Tipping Point* is the perfect place to start, giving you insight into the hidden forces behind how ideas influence the masses.
- *Copy Logic* by Michael Masterson and Mike Palmer — Follow the step-by-step guides and methodical wisdom in this book and you'll be able to transform "B-level" copy into control-beating "A-level" copy, every time.
- *Great Leads* by Michael Masterson and John Forde — Beat the fear of the blank page forever! Here you'll find the six types of great leads to start out any sales letter, and the best way to execute each one for maximum impact.

- *On Writing* by Stephen King — What can a copywriter learn from a master of suspense and horror? Quite a lot. After all, he is one of the most best-selling writers of all time. *On Writing* is King's guide to powerful and effective writing.
- *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* by Dr. Robert Cialdini — Persuasion is the backbone of effective copywriting, and this book is a brilliant portrait of what persuades and why.
- *How to Win Friends & Influence People* by Dale Carnegie — Katie Yeakle highly recommends anyone with AWAI read this book — and that includes you. Of course, it really belongs in any list of classics. This book is all about relationships, and that includes those you have in your life and with your reader.

Remember, the millions of books you haven't read yet are even more valuable than the few you have, so relax, and enjoy the never-ending journey of discovery and learning ahead of you.

Do you have any books you recommend that fellow copywriters add to their libraries? Please share with us in the comments below.

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7 Responses to "Why the Smartest People Have Tons of Unread Books"

AMEN! Julia. AMEN! :-)

Tim Geiger – over a year ago

With AWAI encouragement along with Jay Boyer's suggestions, I have started a book series. "Lord of the Knowledge" by IREELY CARE. The books are blank page books. This article is so true. The series of books can be called a journal. There are chapter titles which the receiver can now write their thoughts. Some folks have purchased the books as a gag gift. A title may look like this "What Men Really Know". When the receiver opens it.nothing. Easy to read. Thank you AWAI and Jay Boyer!

ICARE – over a year ago

Thanks. Great list!

I also recommend Ultimate Selling Story By Copywriter Roy Furr

The Ultimate Selling Story: Cut Through the Marketing Clutter, Forge a Powerful Bond with Your Market, and Set Up the Sale Using the Hero's Journey of Story Selling

VLewis – over a year ago

I have a good deal of "unreads" Now I feel I'm in good company.

I have been reading Scientific Advertising over and over. A chapter a day. Timeless advice. One a Day copywriter vitamin...

Guest (Cindy Mae) – over a year ago

Rage at Chupadera. Though it is a western crime novel, it helps with metaphors and similies. While copywriters don't need those two things, they do need to see the easy, common wording, language style of this author, nothing pretentious.

Guest (Patricia) – over a year ago

Boy! My mattress if not filled with eiderdown but with books!

Uplifting, I assure you.

To help to the task, I suggest:

- the Artist's Way, by Julia Cameron* discover, expand, enjoy your creativity (writing, coaching, art, etc..)
 - Mind Programming, by Eldon Taylor on the Dark and Bright side of Persuasion and Proramming for Success and Healing.
 - What Does That Mean?, also by Eldon Taylor Exploring who you really are, systems of beliefs, power of the mind.
- Enlighting!

Guest (Andre P) – over a year ago

Thanks. My many unread books have had me a bit worried. I often recall what a literature prof once told me: "It's not reading the book that counts, it's the time spent staring out of the window... with the book open on your lap."

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