

Bibliographic resources for guiding research on J.R.R. Tolkien

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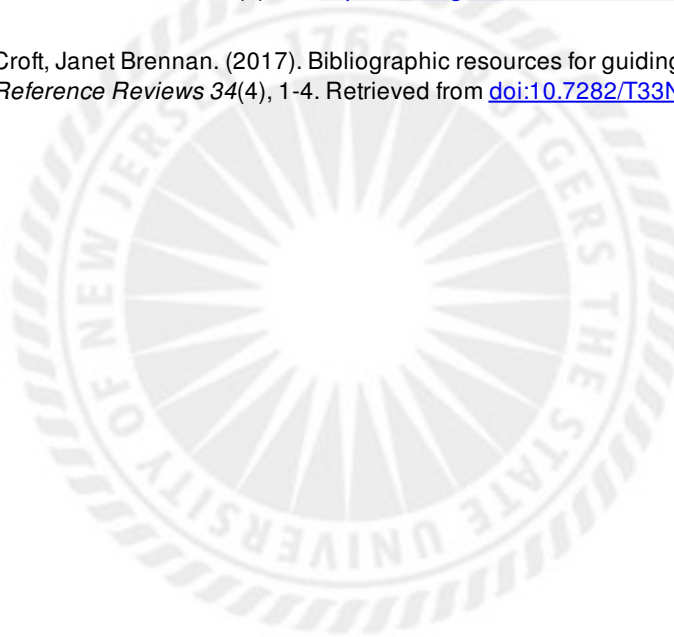
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Citation for this version and the definitive version are shown below.

Citation to Publisher Croft, Janet Brennan. (2017). Bibliographic resources for guiding research on J.R.R. Tolkien.
Version: *Reference Reviews* 34(4), 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.1108/RR-07-2016-0193>.

Citation to *this* Version: Croft, Janet Brennan. (2017). Bibliographic resources for guiding research on J.R.R. Tolkien.
Reference Reviews 34(4), 1-4. Retrieved from [doi:10.7282/T33N25VM](https://doi.org/10.7282/T33N25VM).



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BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESOURCES FOR GUIDING RESEARCH ON J.R.R. TOLKIEN

JANET BRENNAN CROFT

This survey recommends print and electronic resources that will be useful in helping the student, scholar, or thesis writer who wants to begin an in-depth literature search for criticism of the works of J.R.R. Tolkien. Listings are geared towards the English-speaking, North American user, but I have included some European sources as well.

It is important to bear in mind that Tolkien is the subject of both scholarly and popular interest. Evaluating the material located for authority, accuracy, bias, and currency is of utmost importance, particularly if it is found outside of library databases, refereed journals, and reputable publishers. Some of the top publishers in this field are Houghton Mifflin, McFarland Press, Mythopoeic Press, Walking Tree Publishers, Palgrave-MacMillan, and Kent State University Press. Books by these presses can generally be relied upon for properly vetted scholarly content.

The standard databases consulted for research in literature are good starting points: MLA International Bibliography, EBSCOhost (Academic Search Premier), JSTOR, Dissertation Abstracts, and ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global, for example. Two of the top journals are available in full text through databases: Project MUSE includes *Tolkien Studies*, and Literature Resource Center (Gale) and Literature Online (LION), among others, carry *Mythlore*. More specialized databases worth consulting for specific topics include ATLA Religion Database, Film and Television Literature Index, Iter Bibliography, and International Medieval Bibliography and Bibliography of Medieval Civilization.

A word on the "Tolkien Canon." Online discussions of this topic generally deal with "What is truly part of Middle-earth history?" and are of limited usefulness in scholarly writing about Tolkien. For the scholar, the question is "Which works by this author are essential to read in order to understand his artistic output, his non-fiction writing, and his overarching philosophy and themes?" Complicating the establishment of a canon is the continuing posthumous publication of manuscripts and other documents as the Tolkien Estate authorizes them. A useful place to start is David Bratman's essay in Diana Pavlac Glycer's *The Company They Keep: C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien as Writers in Community* (Kent State UP, 2007). Another is the bibliography of published writings by Tolkien in the Scull and Hammond *Companion and Guide* listed below (*Chronology* volume, 813-876); though this list is completist rather than curated, most of the works published during Tolkien's own lifetime should be considered part of the core canon.

An additional important point to remember is that Tolkien does need to be considered as part of a writing group, the Inklings, and not as a writer working in

isolation, and a familiarity with works by Lewis in particular is essential to truly serious scholarship on Tolkien. Tolkien, Lewis, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield, and several others met, read their works in progress to each other, and influenced each other's ideas over the course of the years the Inklings were active. The reference works listed at the end of this essay each provide a concise orientation to the group, while Glyer's book, cited above, is more in-depth.

SPECIALIZED JOURNALS

For scholarly research, the majority, if not all, journal citations are usually expected to be to refereed journals, but in this field much excellent work appears in non-refereed sources as well. Articles on Tolkien make appearances in the more mainstream literary journals fairly infrequently, though that is changing as the definition of the canon broadens and popular culture becomes more widely accepted as a topic of study; still, a great deal of the best work in the field will be found in the first three titles listed below. The major refereed journals in the field are:

- *Tolkien Studies* (2004—) This is the premiere journal exclusively devoted to Tolkien. Published annually, it features refereed articles and shorter notes, primary sources printed for the first time, book reviews, and "The Year's Work in Tolkien Studies" and "Bibliography in English," described below in the Bibliographies section. It is not associated with a society or university, and it is available in full text in Project Muse.
- *Mythlore* (1969—). *Mythlore* is published twice a year by the Mythopoeic Society; it concentrates on Tolkien (about 50% of its content), C.S. Lewis, and Charles Williams, but also widely covers the field of fantasy literature and occasionally other media. Through 1998 it was magazine-sized and included artwork; since 1999 it has been a digest-sized refereed scholarly journal. Issues include refereed articles, unrefereed notes and other short items, and book reviews. The full text from 2002 on is available in several Gale databases and from 2006 on in some ProQuest databases. The society's newsletter *Mythprint*, currently quarterly, also regularly includes shorter, non-refereed scholarly essays.
- *VII: An Anglo-American Literary Review* (1980—). *Seven* or *VII* is published by the Marion E. Wade Center at Wheaton College, and covers J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield, G.K. Chesterton, George Macdonald, and Dorothy L. Sayers. Issues include refereed articles, original sources, and reviews.

- *Journal of Tolkien Research* (2014—) is a relatively new online journal, publishing peer-reviewed articles, book reviews, and other items which may or may not be refereed on a rolling basis.
- *Journal of Inklings Studies* (2011—), originally founded as the *C.S. Lewis Chronicle* in 2005 and jointly sponsored by a group of Lewis, Chesterton, Barfield, and Williams societies, is published twice yearly. It publishes refereed articles, book reviews, and original source materials in Supplement volumes. The focus is more on Lewis than Tolkien, but Tolkien is well-represented.
- *Waymeet for Tolkien Teachers* (2015—) is an online journal and resource center sponsored by the Modern Language Association. While none have been published yet, it will include refereed articles on Tolkien pedagogy. The resource center, though, is robust and useful.

Many non-refereed journals in the field also publish reputable scholarship and are often partially indexed in library databases. Among the top titles are three European journals:

- *Hither Shore: Interdisciplinary Journal on Modern Fantasy* (German and English, 2004—) Bilingual (German and English) annual journal of the Deutschen Tolkien Gesellschaft (DTG), the German Tolkien Society. The articles are products of the Society's conference, and as such contributors are primarily but not exclusively graduate students, and issues follow themes. Articles in German are accompanied by summaries in English, and vice versa. It also publishes reviews.
- *Inklings: Jahrbuch für Literatur und Ästhetik* (German and English, 1983—). This annual publishes articles, reviews, and shorter pieces. Issues follow the organization's Symposium themes and may deal with authors who are not Inklings (Margaret Atwood and Conan Doyle, for example).
- *Mallorn* (1970—) is the scholarly journal of the UK-based Tolkien Society and is published once a year. It includes articles and reviews as well as art and other creative work. The society's bimonthly bulletin *Amon Hen* is also widely indexed and includes some scholarly but unrefereed work.

OPEN ACCESS BIBLIOGRAPHIES

General online bibliographic sources can lead to much material: OpenDOAR, Digital Commons Network, Directory of Open Access Journals, Academia.edu, ResearchGate, and Google Scholar, for example. Some useful specialized sources include:

- **Mythlore Plus Index.** <http://www.mythsoc.org/press/mythlore-index-plus-electronic/> Downloadable and searchable PDF annotated index of the entire run of *Mythlore*; also indexes all articles and reviews published in *Tolkien Journal* (1965-1976), published Mythcon Conference Proceedings, and Mythopoeic Press essay collections.
- **Tolkien Database** <http://wheatoncollege.edu/english/tolkien-bibliography/> is a fairly limited database, only containing 735 items at present and apparently not updated since 2007; hopefully it will be updated further in the future. While the fact that it is on hiatus makes it less useful for current research, it is a project connected to **Drout and Wynne's list of Tolkien Criticism 1982-2000** https://www.academia.edu/9116653/Tom_Shippeys_J.R.R._Tolkien_Author_of_the_Century_and_a_look_back_at_Tolkien_criticism_since_1982_Envoi_9.2_2000_101-34_with_Michael_Drout, a still-useful survey of the field and a bibliography.
- **Tolkien Transactions (Parma-Kenta)** <http://parmarkenta.blogspot.com/> : Since 2010 Danish fan Troels Forchhammer has published a periodical list of resources on Tolkien, including scholarly publications. This site can be very useful for locating European sources or less-formal but still scholarly sources like blog discussions.
- **Tolkien Gateway** http://tolkiengateway.net/wiki/Main_Page: While not primarily a bibliographic source, it can be useful for locating a brief bibliography of a particular scholar's works or links to journals.
- **Science Fiction and Fantasy Research Database** <http://sfprd.library.tamu.edu/> is an online index to over 60,000 historical and critical items about science fiction, fantasy and horror, maintained by the Texas A&M University Libraries.
- Swedish fan and scholar Åke Bertenstam maintains two useful lists: <http://www.forodrim.org/bibliography/tbchron.html>, **A Chronological Bibliography of the Writings of J.R.R. Tolkien** (books, contributions to books, and contributions to periodicals), and <http://www.forodrim.org/bibliography/tolklist.html>, **A Chronological Bibliography of Books About Tolkien** (biographies, criticism, bibliographies, dictionaries, concordances, quiz books or any other book *about* Tolkien and his writings). Both are updated regularly.

PRINT BIBLIOGRAPHIES

There are few specialized bibliographies on sub-topics within Tolkien studies; perhaps the first major one, and hopefully the start of a new trend, is **Robin Anne Reid's "The History of Scholarship on Female Characters in J.R.R. Tolkien's Legendarium: A Feminist Bibliographic Essay,"** in *Perilous and Fair: Women in the Works and Life of J.R.R. Tolkien*. Ed. Janet Brennan Croft and Leslie A. Donovan (Mythopoeic Press, 2015, 13–40). These bibliographies are more general:

- *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Descriptive Bibliography*. Wayne G. Hammond and Douglas A. Anderson. Winchester, Eng.: Oak Knoll Press and The British Library, 2002. An exhaustive descriptive bibliography of every publication by Tolkien, from early scholarly papers to posthumous works. Addenda and corrigenda have appeared in Hammond and Scull's occasional magazine, *The Tolkien Collector*.
- *Tolkien Criticism: An Annotated Checklist*. Richard C. West. Rev ed. Kent, OH: Kent State UP, 1981. As the title states, this is a checklist of criticism about Tolkien. Unfortunately, it is simply a checklist; there is no subject index to the items listed, though they are roughly organized into types of critical works. West's article in *Modern Fiction Studies* picks up where this left off, and can be searched full text if downloaded from Project MUSE: "**A Tolkien Checklist: Selected Criticism 1981-2004.**" *Modern Fiction Studies* 50.4 (2004): 1015-28.
- *J.R.R. Tolkien: Six Decades of Criticism*. Judith A. Johnson. Greenwood: 1986. Print. Coverage through 1984; contains notes on hundreds of reviews, articles, essays, theses, dissertations, and books. The book's organization is chronological, each chapter devoted to a particular era in Tolkien criticism. Each chapter contains a brief introductory essay that describes works by Tolkien published within a particular time frame and summarizes the patterns or trends of critical response during the period covered.
- "**The Year's Work in Tolkien Studies**" and "**Bibliography in English.**" These columns have been a feature of most issues of the journal *Tolkien Studies* since its inception in 2004. "The Year's Work" includes annotation and discussion. As noted above, *Tolkien Studies* is available in electronic format in Project MUSE. A similarly annotated column, "**Inklings Bibliography,**" ran in *Mythlore* in issues #12-79 and #81-85, from 1976 through 1999, but is not yet indexed at the item level. More broadly, check *The Year's Work in English Studies*, which is available in full text in a number of databases.

Some more general Tolkien reference works also include brief bibliographies under entries on specific topics:

- *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment*. Michael D.C. Drout, ed. New York: Routledge, 2007. While this encyclopedia has been judged uneven by some reviewers, it includes a wealth of information and bibliographies accompanying nearly every entry.
- *A Companion to J.R.R. Tolkien*. Stuart D. Lee, ed. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014. Similarly, there is some unevenness to the lengthy articles, but the bibliographies are well worth while.
- *The J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide*. 2 vols. Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006. The first volume is a chronology of Tolkien's life and work, in great and exhaustive detail. The second volume, the Reader's Guide, is encyclopedic in nature with alphabetically arranged articles, ranging from very brief to quite extensive, on a wide range of topics. References included in many of the entries make an excellent guide to important and essential works of criticism.

While the use of general literature reference sources will satisfy most needs, the serious scholar will need to look beyond MLA and similar resources to do a comprehensive search of the literature. The field of Tolkien scholarship has seen a period of extremely rapid expansion in the years since the Peter Jackson films were released, and has shown no signs of slowing; I expect that the coming years will see growth in the areas of online open-access journals, reference works, digital corpora, and specialized bibliographies in particular.