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Bibliographic Resources for Literature Searches on J.R.R Tolkien

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Cover Page Footnote

My thanks to the many colleagues who proved helpful suggestions and comments while this document was open for comment on Academia.edu in January and February 2016.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESOURCES FOR LITERATURE SEARCHES ON J.R.R TOLKIEN

Janet Brennan Croft

This guide is designed to help the student, scholar, or thesis writer begin an in-depth literature search on the works of J.R.R. Tolkien. This guide is geared towards the English-speaking, North American user, but I have attempted to include European sources as well when I am aware of them. As this is a field friendly to independent scholars not attached to a university or college, I am addressing their information needs as well. For general help in doing an in-depth literature search for a thesis or dissertation, many libraries and institutions provide guides online. (For example, see [this Purdue guide on preparing an annotated bibliography](#).) The subject librarian for literature or humanities at your local institution will be an excellent resource during the process.

Keep in mind that Tolkien is the subject of both scholarly and popular interest; carefully evaluating the material you locate for authority, accuracy, bias, and currency is of utmost importance. For scholarly research, the majority, if not all, of your journal citations should be to refereed journals, but in this field much excellent work appears in non-refereed sources as well. Your local library and librarians can also provide guidance in these areas. (For example, see [this Rutgers guide to evaluating web resources](#).)

The major refereed journals in the field are *Tolkien Studies* (2004—), *Mythlore* (about 50% of its content is Tolkien-centric; 1969—), the online *Journal of Tolkien Research* (2014—), *Seven: An Anglo-American Literary Review* (Tolkien is one of their seven core authors; 1980—), *Journal of Inklings Studies* (2011—), *Hither Shore: Interdisciplinary Journal on Modern Fantasy* (German and English, 2004—), and *Inklings: Jahrbuch für Literatur und Ästhetik* (German and English, 1983—). Many non-refereed journals in the field also publish reputable scholarship and are indexed in library databases, *Mallorn* being the most notable. 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.

“Tolkien” is of course going to be the major search term to use; in some databases this will turn up so few results that it will be easy to winnow through them, and in others you will have to narrow a large number of results down by using additional terms relevant to your specific topic. You may find it useful to go broader by searching for “Inklings” or even “fantasy.” If you are researching the films, use the titles; abstracts and subject headings may not include the term “Tolkien.” Fortunately you are unlikely to get too many “false positives” as Tolkien is a relatively unique name.

LIBRARY DATABASES

Not all libraries will have access to all of these databases. If you are not connected with a university or college library and can't search online, you can still usually walk into a local academic library and use its databases. Many state libraries in the U.S. provide access to some of these databases; contact your state library or local public library for assistance. Many other highly specialized databases will also be useful for more targeted research into Tolkien's medieval sources, his linguistic work, his contributions to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, music related to his works or the films, and so on.

- **MLA International Bibliography:** Indexes critical scholarship on literature, language, linguistics, folklore, film, and the teaching of language and literature in journal articles, series, monographs, dissertations, bibliographies, proceedings and other materials. It includes more than 2,000,000 citations drawn from 4400 journals and series and from 1000 book publishers. Indexing of e-journals, online bibliographies, electronic monographs, and scholarly Web sites is now included.
- **EBSCOhost (Academic Search Premier):** A multi-disciplinary database designed specifically for academic institutions. With a large collection of peer-reviewed full-text journals, the database offers information in nearly every area of academic study including language and linguistics, arts & literature, ethnic studies, and many more. Your library may also carry other broadly general academic periodical databases and other EBSCO family databases.
- **ATLA Religion Database:** An essential tool for the study of religion. It is the premier index to journal articles, book reviews, and collections of essays in all fields of religion. Very useful for study of Tolkien's religion and philosophy.
- **Film and Television Literature Index:** FTLI is a comprehensive bibliographic database covering all types of writing, including industry papers, news journalism, and scholarly academic journals on topics for film and television. Useful if studying Tolkien on film. Some institutions may carry other film literature indexes as well.
- **Dissertation Abstracts:** Indexes U.S. doctoral dissertations completed at accredited institutions since 1861 (abstracts since 1980) and dissertations and theses, most with abstracts, from the U.K. and Ireland since 1716; includes some dissertations from Canada and Europe, as well as some

master's theses and foreign language dissertations. Most dissertations 1997 to present are full text. **ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global** is a comparable database of 3.8 million works, 1.7 million in full text, from over 88 countries. In the UK, look for the similar database **EThOS**. Dissertations in recent years are often uploaded to institutional repositories instead of Dissertation Abstracts; check **OpenDOAR** below as well.

- **Project MUSE:** Provides full-text access to more than 320 scholarly journals in the arts and humanities, social sciences, and mathematics. Fields covered include literature and criticism, history, the visual and performing arts, cultural studies, education, political science, gender studies, economics, and many others. *Tolkien Studies* is included in full text in this database.
- **JSTOR:** Provides electronic access to back runs of more than 2,000 important scholarly journals.
- **Literature Resource Center (Gale):** A full-text electronic database that provides on-line access to biographies, bibliographies, and critical analysis of authors and their works from every age and literary discipline. LRC covers more than 124,000 novelists, poets, essayists, journalists and other writers, with in-depth coverage of 2,000 of the most-studied authors. *Mythlore* is carried in full text in this database. **EBSCO's Literary Reference Center** is a similar resource specifically designed for public libraries, secondary schools, junior/community colleges, and undergraduate research.
- **Literature Online (LION):** Searchable full-text of more than 350,000 literary works in the English language—343,000 works of poetry, 5000 dramatic works, and 2000 prose works; 212 full-text literary journals; the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature; and reference sources including bibliographies, 4000 author biographies, dictionaries and encyclopedia. *Mythlore* is carried in full text in this database.
- **WorldCat (OCLC):** A global catalog of library collections that enables users to search for books, journals (by journal title or broad subject, not content within journals), archival materials, dissertations, government publications, maps, music, musical scores, videos, and other resources. Usually your local library holdings are identified. For items not owned, there should be a “Place ILL Request” link if you are accessing it through an institution where you are eligible for interlibrary loan. You can access

<https://www.worldcat.org/> without going through a library, but some functionality is limited.

- Two databases are useful for coverage of Tolkien's medieval scholarship and sources: **Iter Bibliography** (a component of Iter Gateway to the Middle Ages and Renaissance) indexes books, journals, and other secondary source material pertaining to the Middle Ages and Renaissance (400-1700). **International Medieval Bibliography and Bibliography of Medieval Civilization** (Late Antiquity to the Late Middle Ages (300-1500) includes more European and non-English sources.
- **Your library's online catalog:** Don't neglect to search your library's catalog of the material it owns locally. Tolkien criticism is published widely in both print and electronic book formats.

FREE OPEN ACCESS RESOURCES

These resources and databases are available to anyone, regardless of institutional affiliation.

- **[Mythlore Plus Index](#)**. Downloadable and searchable PDF index of the entire run of *Mythlore*; also includes all articles and reviews published in *Tolkien Journal* (1965-1976), published Mythcon Conference Proceedings, and Mythopoeic Press essay collections.
- **[OpenDOAR](#)**: An authoritative directory of academic open access repositories. Uses a simple Google search for contents. Many institutions now require their faculty to upload their research to local repositories; OpenDOAR searches them. **[Digital Commons Network](#)** is a similar resource.
- **[Directory of Open Access Journals](#)** is an online directory that indexes and provides access to high quality, open access, peer-reviewed journals. About 7000 of the over-11,000 journals listed are indexed at the article level. Many international journals are included; a potentially useful source for non-English language sources.
- **[Academia.edu](#)**: A free international repository/web page/reputation management tool for academics and independent scholars. Searchable by researcher name, subject areas, and article titles. **[ResearchGate](#)** is similar

but more science-oriented. Both may require you to set up a free account before searching.

- [Tolkien Database](#) 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.
- [Drout and Wynne's list of Tolkien Criticism 1982-2000](#) is a survey of the field and a bibliography.
- [Google Scholar](#) searches scholarly literature and includes peer-reviewed papers, dissertations, book citations, preprints, abstracts and technical reports from a variety of content providers. Sources of material include academic publishers, professional societies, preprint repositories, universities and open access publishers. Some content is available in full text.
- [Tolkien Transactions \(Parma-Kenta\)](#): 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](#): While not primarily an academic source, it can be useful for locating the source of a quotation or piece of information within Tolkien's works, or for a brief bibliography of a particular scholar's works.

PRINT

- *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Descriptive Bibliography*. Wayne G. Hammond and Douglas A. Anderson. Winchester, Eng.: Oak Knoll Press and The British Library, 2002. This lists Tolkien's own works. Hammond and Scull's occasional magazine, *The Tolkien Collector*, serves as an update.
- *Tolkien Criticism: An Annotated Checklist*. Richard C. West. Rev ed. Kent, OH: Kent State UP, 1981. West's article in *Modern Fiction Studies* picks up where this left off, and can be found on 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.
- 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. Altadena: Mythopoeic Press, 2015. 13–40.
- These reference works 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.
 - ***Dictionnaire Tolkien.*** Vincent Ferré. Paris: CNRS Editions, 2012.
 - ***A Companion to J.R.R. Tolkien.*** Stuart D. Lee, ed. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014.
 - ***The J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide.*** 2 vols. Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006.

OTHER TIPS

- Don’t neglect the low-tech approach of following up on the works cited in the articles and books you find particularly relevant to your research.

Many items that never made it into the bibliographic sources listed above can be found this way.

- Managing the material you find is an important part of the process. It's worth looking into bibliographic management tools like Zotero, Mendeley, RefWorks, or EndNote that will help you catalog your sources, keep your notes and scanned material together, and create bibliographies. Some are available free online; some may be available at reduced cost through your institution or library, which may also offer instruction on how to use them.
- 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 books and shorter pieces by the Tolkien Estate. A useful place to start is David Bratman's essay in Diana Pavlac Glyer's *The Company They Keep: C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien as Writers in Community*; an important point to remember here is that Tolkien does need to be considered as part of a writing group, not as a writer working in isolation, and a familiarity with works by Lewis in particular is essential to serious scholarship on Tolkien. Another is the bibliography of published writings by Tolkien in the Scull and Hammond *Companion* listed above (*Chronology* volume, 813-876); though this is completist rather than curated, most of the works published during Tolkien's own lifetime should be considered the core canon. My own ["A basic multi-media collection by and about J.R.R. Tolkien"](#) (*Collection Building* 30.2 (2011): 98-102) may also be a useful guide, especially if you are building a personal collection or suggesting resources to your local library.