

Michael DeNotto

Wine, viticulture, and enology

Resources for study

If it weren't for wine, I might not be a librarian. No, not because the rigors of graduate school sometimes demand a glass of wine after finishing an arduous project like completely redoing the CSS for a public library's website, or writing a grant proposal for an Administration and Management course.

No, not because a glass of wine is a requisite accompaniment to any text by a philosopher like Jacques Derrida or Giorgio Agamben.

No, not because I need a glass of wine (or two) after enduring an afternoon of weeding the reference collection or a day filled with "other duties as assigned" tasks.

And, while wine can certainly allay and palliate such tensions, the actual reason that I might not be a librarian without wine, is that I wrote about the intersections of wine and librarianship in my application to the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois.

I must have made some cogent points, as I was accepted.

In my application, I noted the similarities between library classification systems and wine classification systems, which are made up of appellations. *Appellation* (from the Latin *appeller*, meaning, to name), is the term for legally defined geographic areas that designate where certain wines are produced. This system is used across Europe and the United States for organization, regulation, and marketing of wines that come from

unique geographic areas like Saint-Émilion in Bordeaux, France, or Howell Mountain in Napa Valley, California. Another connection was *provenance*, tracing it for a wine is just as important to collectors and consumers as tracing the ownership of an historical object is to an archivist.

Additionally, the concept of *terroir*, meaning the "expression of a place," is used to explain how the same grape varietal can produce different flavors when grown in a climate that has different soil composition, weather, or altitude. This concept of terroir struck me as very similar to a book's ability to evoke a sense of time and place. Furthermore, while working in a wine store during my time in library school, I started practicing reference interview techniques with customers: repeating their questions for clarity and inquiring as to the purpose of their wine needs (for a party? cooking? food pairing? collecting? immediate drinking?).

Another connection I made between wine and librarianship was the fact that I was cataloging and preserving my own wine collection, bottles stored and curated in my parent's basement, kept in a consistently cool place and away from the light. Furthermore, I kept a spreadsheet detailing the items held in

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my collection with accompanying metadata. Yet, wine doesn't just overlap with librarianship.

The study of wine and grapes is interdisciplinary with connections to fields like agriculture, archaeology, biology, botany, chemistry, economics, engineering, food studies, geography, and history. There are more than 18 different academic institutions across the United States that offer programs in viticulture and/or enology. Wine production and grape domestication and cultivation has occurred across the globe and throughout history, dating back at least 5,000 years. Additionally, there are actual wine libraries, archives, and librarians. There is also a growing population of wine-related digitized archival collections and digital resources that have become available, while some archival collections aren't yet digitized, they are becoming easier to discover.

Finally, there is historical precedent for wine-influencing librarianship. In 1733, a French envoy living in Louisiana wrote home to his government asking permission to build a new building with protected aboveground storage, due to previous hurricane damage. His first justification was to protect his wine. The second was for the safe storage of government documents.¹ Below is an assortment of wine, enology, and viticulture related resources for study.

Digital collections

- **Label This.** From the University of California (UC)-Davis, this is an online project and digital collection of wine labels that were collected by noted American wine expert and professor of viticulture and enology, Maynard Amerine. Including more than 5,000 labels going back to the 1800s, these digitized labels are both aesthetically pleasing and historically informative. Additionally, UC-Davis has incorporated a crowdfunded transcription approach, as they are offering anyone the chance to help transcribe the labels in an effort to facilitate searchability and accessibility. *Access:* <https://labelthis.library.ucdavis.edu/>.

- **Oregon Wine History Archive.** The Oregon Wine History Archive was founded in 2011 by Linfield College. With a focus on tracing

the history of the Oregon wine industry, this digitized special collection houses oral history interviews, educational materials, photos, maps, wine labels, transcripts, documents from specific wineries like Sokol Blosser and Bethel Heights, and materials from organizations like the International Pinot Noir Celebration. Items are available for download in this exemplary collection of wine-related history in a state where initial wine-producing efforts were derided, but now are world renowned. *Access:* <http://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/owha/>.

- **Wines of Southern Oregon.** With a more region-specific focus than the Oregon Wine History Archive, this digitized collection includes materials from some different wineries and different appellations in Oregon. There are materials, images, labels, and miscellanea from some different contributors than those in the Oregon Wine History Archive. *Access:* <http://digital.hanlib.sou.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16085coll8>.

Wine libraries

- **Cornell University—John Wilkinson Family Wine Library.** Founded in 2016, this library holds only bottles of wine, and, unfortunately, is not publicly accessible. This library was designed specifically for tasting and research done by students and faculty in the Cornell University Department of Food and Science. Wilkinson provided the initial portion of the collection, which includes many rare wines as well as some that are flawed and would not typically make it to market. This allows researchers to see how these flaws develop under natural circumstances. Cornell University also holds a wine-related archival collection, the "Eastern Wine and Grape Archive." *Access:* <http://news.cornell.edu/stories/2016/05/new-library-shelves-3400-bottles-wine>.

- **Napa Valley Wine Library.** The Napa Valley Wine Library is a part of the St. Helena Public Library. It is a collection that was founded in the 1960s and focuses on popular materials and winemaking, though it also holds periodicals, newsletters, and oral histories. The library's most unique aspect is that it is surrounded by vineyards. *Access:* <http://shpl.org>.

- **Sonoma County Wine Library.** Run by Wine Librarian/Branch Manager Jon Haupt, this library began in 1990 and holds more than 5,000 materials, with some dating back to the 16th century. It has a number of digital collections like the “Sonoma County Visionaries, Immigrants and Winemakers” collection and the “Speaking of Wine” collection. “Visionaries” focuses on the history of the winemaking industry in Sonoma with special attention to early wineries, wine families, and the immigrants that settled there. The “Speaking of Wine” collection is a number of transcripts and recordings of oral histories from winemakers that have influenced the Sonoma wine scene. Finally, the library maintains the Internet Wine Research Database, as well as a subscription to more than 40 wine-related periodicals. *Access:* <https://sonomalibrary.org/locations/sonoma-county-wine-library>.

- **UC-Davis—Peter J. Shields Library.** Hailed by recognized wine expert Hugh Johnson as the “world’s greatest wine library,” this library maintains a rigorous academic and international focus, with rare materials in more than 50 languages, dating back multiple centuries. It is run by Axel E. Borg, who holds the title of wine and food science bibliographer at UC-Davis. *Access:* <https://www.library.ucdavis.edu/library/peter-j-shields/>.

Databases

- **Foundation Plant Services Grape Registry.** An updated version of what was once called the National Grape Registry, this database is maintained by the UC-Davis. The catalog includes 595 grape varieties and 2,341 individual selections from those varieties. Many of the entries are accompanied by photos, references, the variety’s pedigree, as well as an exhaustive list of alternate names. For example, the entry on the grape varietal Malbec includes the fact that in France it can be found in wines from the region of Cahors, where the grape can be referred to as Auxerrois. *Access:* <http://fps.ucdavis.edu/fgr/about.cfm>.

- **International Wine Research Database.** Supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, this database serves as a bib-

liography for wine-related research. It includes indexing for journals like *Wine & Viticulture Journal*, international journals like *Bulletin de l’Organisation Internationale de la Vigne et du Vin*, as well as open access journals like *Vitis: Journal of Grapevine Research*. The editor behind the database is the Sonoma County Library’s Wine Librarian Jon Haupt, and the database includes the holdings of the Sonoma County Wine Library collection. Additionally, the V. E. Petrucci Library from Fresno State is also a participating organization of the database. There are links to digitized materials and the journal articles themselves, when accessible. *Access:* <http://iwrdb.org/>.



International Wine Research Database

- **Vitis-VEA (Viticulture Enology Abstracts).** Supported by Germany’s Federal Research Centre for Cultivated Plants (Bundesforschungsinstitut für Kulturpflanzen), this abstract focused database is international in scope, though most of it is in English. The abstracts of scientific articles cover grape and wine-related fields like morphology, soil science, and phytopathology. Though the database mostly includes journal articles, there are some conference proceedings and monographs. The abstracts are indexed through 2018, and one can search by author, journal title, conference title, year, document number, and via its controlled vocabulary thesaurus. *Access:* <http://www.vitis-vea.de/>.

- **Vitis-VIVC (International Variety Catalog).** Also supported by Germany’s Federal Research Centre for Cultivated Plants, this resource was founded in 1983 and has been online since 1996. It is focused on being an international inventory of species, varieties, and genotypes that relate to the grapevine genus, *vitis*. This database includes things like characterization data, data on disease resistance, and breeding data. A user can search by species, cultivar name, pedigree, holding institutions, area by countries, and more. It also includes links to comparable

databases in other countries like Bulgaria, Italy, Slovenia, and Spain. *Access:* <http://www.vivc.de/index.php>.

Open access journals

- **International Journal of Wine Research.** Peer-reviewed, this journal is indexed in Scopus from 2009, and it is also indexed in the OAIster as well as the DOAJ. *Access:* <https://www.dovepress.com/international-journal-of-wine-research-journal>.

- **OENO One.** An open access, peer-reviewed journal, *OENO One* was founded in 2016 and is backed by European researchers and institutions. This journal replaced the previous version, *Journal International des Sciences de la Vigne et du Vin*, which began in 1967. *Access:* <https://oenone.eu/>.

- **Vitis: Journal of Grape Vine Research.** This quarterly published journal that dates back to 1957 is peer reviewed, and it is supported by Germany's Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture. It has been indexed and full-text of all issues is available. *Access:* <https://ojs.openagrar.de/index.php/VITIS>.

Organizations

- **American Association of Wine Economists.** An educational organization that publishes a peer-reviewed journal *The Journal of Wine Economics*, this organization focuses on wine economics and stages scholarly conferences around that focus. *Access:* <https://www.wine-economics.org/>.

- **American Society for Enology and Viticulture.** This organization produces the exemplary scientific wine- and grape-related journal, the *American Journal of Enology and Viticulture*, which is quarterly and peer reviewed. The organization itself has more

than 2,000 members and began in 1950. Recently, the organization began a new journal known as *Catalyst*, with a focus on bringing research into practice. *Access:* <http://www.asev.org>.



Wine apps

- **CellarTracker.** Both a standalone website and an app, users can create a profile and then track and organize one's wine collection. Metadata that can be used to catalog wines includes vintage, locale, bottle size, producer, vineyard, and optimal drinking window, as well as a plethora of different scores from reviewers like Jancis Robinson or *Wine Enthusiast* magazine. There are also community-provided reviews. *Access:* <https://www.cellartracker.com/>.



- **Vivino.** Vivino is a popular wine related app that allows the user to take a photo of a wine label (or even scan a wine list), and then the app will provide a rating, offer reviews, and tell the user the average price. Most of this information comes crowdsourced via the app's user base. *Access:* <https://www.vivino.com/>.

Note

1. Winston De Ville, "Louisiana's First Archives Building: A Compromise with Wine in 1733." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, vol. 27, no. 3, 1986, pp. 298–301. *TC*



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