Discussion: Chapter 5 in *Writing on the Wall* by Standage

**In-class exercise:** Citation and reference formats.
Why are there so many different citation styles? (click to read)

Why does it matter so much whether I follow any set format as long as all the information is there?

Well, for one thing, consistency is always a good idea. But the real issue is with the phrase “as long as all the information is there.” By following a fixed format you are forced either to demonstrate that you found all the information or to acknowledge that you don’t know it.
Suppose you have a citation such as the following (which is not in an acceptable format):

Galbraith, James. “E-books on the Internet.”

It appears as though this is enough information for anyone to find the article. (Go ahead—visit that page. You’ll find the paper.) But the reader might want to know more—for instance, when was this article written? There is no information at the link given above! Or we might want to know where the article appeared—was it in a journal, a book, a conference? There is no information at the link given above!
A conscientious reader might question the validity of any data you use from this reference. This, in turn, reflects poorly on you since you seem to be treating the source as a valid one for no evident reason.
Now suppose you are adhering to a format such as MLA. The required style (from the Purdue Online Writing Lab) for an electronic source is not clear—we just don’t know enough about the article. The best we can do is probably something like:


This is at least honest—we are acknowledging that we don’t know the date or the publisher. But there is something better we can do...
...search for a better version of the article! A search for the title turns up the following:


This article is actually a chapter in a book! Now we can use:

The moral: if you don’t have all the information, search some more!
Exercise

Create the best MLA-style entries you can for the following articles; note that you may need to search for more information!

▶ “From pencils to pixels: The Stages of Literacy Technology”
▶ “Introduction: Writing in the Late Age of Print”

Post your citations in the Slack channel named “march16exercise.”
Feel free to work with a partner (but make sure you identify the partners in your post so I can give credit!)