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# The Book List: Brian Eno's essential reading for the apocalypse

Every Wednesday, Alex Johnson delves into a unique collection of titles

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Return to life of Brian: the musician has handpicked some weighty tomes to help humanity find its feet again if the worst happens *Rex*

**A Pattern Language** by Christopher Alexander et al  
**The Illustrated Flora of Britain and Northern Europe** by Marjorie Blamey and Christopher Grey Wilson

**The Discoverers** by Daniel Boorstin

**The Wheels of Commerce** by Fernand Braudel

Percy Muir

**Dancing in the Streets** by Barbara Ehrenreich

**Roll Jordan Roll** by Eugene Genovese

**Mother Nature: A History of Mothers, Infants, and Natural Selection** by Sarah Hardy

**The Face of Battle** by John Keegan



Barbara Ehrenreich's musings on group celebration could be a vital work to rebuild civilisation (Rex)

**The Cambridge World History of Food** (two volumes) by Kenneth F Kiple and Kriemhild Coneè Ornelas

**The Mind in the Cave: Consciousness and the Origins of Art** by David Lewis-Williams

**A History of the World in 100 Objects** by Neil MacGregor

**Peter the Great: His Life and World** by Richard Massie

**Keeping Together in Time** by William McNeill

**Contingency, Irony and Solidarity** by Richard Rorty

**The Confidence Trap** by David Runciman

**Seeing Like a State** by James C Scott

**War and Peace** by Leo Tolstoy

**The Notebooks** by Leonardo da Vinci



### **What was on Osama bin Laden's bookshelf?**

What happens when a [insert your catastrophe of choice here] happens? While many people will be most worried about clean water, shelter and the location of their loved ones, there will also be those grieving over the mass destruction of our libraries and bookshops. But fear not! The farsighted people at San Francisco's the Long Now Foundation have put together a kind of *Desert Island Discs* "must read" list of around 3,500 books – they call it the Manual for Civilization – which they feel will best keep us going through the disaster and help us rebuild everything a bit. In the meantime, it is available in conventional library format at their public space, The Interval.



The books selected fall into four categories and cover far more than basic survival techniques:

Cultural Canon (great authors such as Shakespeare and Plato)

Mechanics of Civilization (technical knowledge, how to build and understand how things work)

Rigorous Science Fiction (books that tell potentially useful stories about a hypothetical future)

Long-term Thinking, Futurism, and relevant history (works which focus on how to think about the future, some including surveys of the past)

What guilty pleasures were on David Cameron's No 10 bookshelf?

A peek at Art Garfunkel's library – from Twain to Freud

What books did Oscar Wilde read in prison?

David Bowie's top 100 must-read books

What was on Charles Darwin's reading list?

The list is largely put together by Long Now staff and members, but famous creatives with particular areas of interest have also been invited to submit short lists of ideas. The one above contains all musician Brian Eno's suggestions under the heading of "long-term thinking" and other contributors include Violet Blue (human sexuality), Ami Burnham (reproduction and birth) and astronomer Jill Tarter (first contact).

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If something goes

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*'A Book of Book Lists' by Alex Johnson, £7.99, British Library Publishing*

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