

The Writing Life, the National Education Scorecard, and The Map of Knowledge

Recommended Reading from Tech Founders

2026-05-25

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By Recommended Reading from Tech Founders • May 25, 2026

Dan Shipper supplied the richest signal with three book recommendations, led by Annie Dillard's *The Writing Life* as required reading for new hires. Bill Gurley added a data-heavy PBS NewsHour segment on K-12 learning decline, and Balaji highlighted a book on how classical knowledge survived through translation networks.

What stood out

The clearest signal today came from Dan Shipper's reading stack on Lenny's Podcast. *The Writing Life* had the strongest practical endorsement: Shipper said Every gives it to new employees and asks them to read the last chapter because it sits at the intersection of writing, technology, the future, and time [1]. Around that, he recommended Churchill's *History of World War II* as a rare history-memoir from someone who both did the work and wrote about it [1], and *The Rigor of Angels* as a history of ideas linking Heisenberg, Borges, and Kant with interesting overlaps to AI [1].

The other two picks broadened the set. Bill Gurley surfaced a PBS NewsHour segment on the National Education Scorecard and emphasized Thomas Kane's annual data collection as a tool for improving US K-12 education [2]. Balaji highlighted *The Map of Knowledge*, a book on how classical texts survived through networks of translation and transmission across Mediterranean cities from Baghdad to Venice [3].

Most compelling recommendation

The Writing Life

- **Content type:** Book
- **Author/creator:** Annie Dillard
- **Link/URL:** direct book link not provided in the source; source discussion: Lenny's Podcast episode
- **Who recommended it:** Dan Shipper
- **Key takeaway:** Shipper said Every gives the book to new hires and asks them to read the last chapter, which he described as sitting at the intersection of writing, technology, the future, and time [1]
- **Why it matters:** This was the strongest recommendation in today's set because it was described as part of team onboarding, not just as a book he enjoyed [1]

"Everyone at Every has to read *The Writing Life*." [1]



The AI paradox: More automation, more humans, more work / Dan Shipper (85:24)

Two more books from Dan Shipper

Churchill's *History of World War II*

- **Content type:** Book
- **Author/creator:** Winston Churchill
- **Link/URL:** direct book link not provided in the source; source discussion: Lenny's Podcast episode
- **Who recommended it:** Dan Shipper

- **Key takeaway:** Shipper praised it as a combination of history and memoir and emphasized the value of reading an account from someone who “was there” [1]
- **Why it matters:** He linked the book to the rare combination of building and writing, which makes it a strong pick for readers who want firsthand accounts from practitioners [1]

The Rigor of Angels

- **Content type:** Book
- **Author/creator:** not provided in the source
- **Link/URL:** direct book link not provided in the source; source discussion: Lenny’s Podcast episode
- **Who recommended it:** Dan Shipper
- **Key takeaway:** He described it as a history of ideas connecting Heisenberg, Borges, and Kant, with “interesting overlaps with AI stuff” [1]
- **Why it matters:** It stands out as a cross-disciplinary recommendation for readers interested in how physics, literature, and philosophy intersect with AI-related thinking [1]

One measurement-focused watch

PBS NewsHour segment on the National Education Scorecard

- **Content type:** Video
- **Author/creator:** PBS NewsHour; Thomas Kane is featured as one of the scorecard’s authors
- **Link/URL:** <https://x.com/NewsHour/status/2057953200611774702>
- **Who recommended it:** Bill Gurley
- **Key takeaway:** The segment says math scores are down in 70% of school districts and reading scores in 83% versus a decade ago, with only limited improvement since 2022; it also notes that 8th-grade reading is now at its lowest level since 1990 [4]
- **Why it matters:** Gurley called it an “Important watch” because Thomas Kane’s annual data collection can help drive improvement in US K-12 education [2]

“Many problems. Some bright spots.” [2]

A longer-history pick on how knowledge survives

The Map of Knowledge

- **Content type:** Book
- **Author/creator:** not provided in the source
- **Link/URL:** <https://www.amazon.com/dp/0385541767> [3]
- **Who recommended it:** Balaji

- **Key takeaway:** The book follows Euclid's *Elements*, Ptolemy's *The Almagest*, and Galen's medical writings through seven Mediterranean cities, tracing how scholars collected, translated, and shared manuscripts until Venice's printers helped the Renaissance take root [3]
- **Why it matters:** It offers a concrete history of how knowledge persists through translation, preservation, and institutional support [3]

Bottom line

If you save one item, save *The Writing Life* for the clearest evidence that a founder has turned a book into operating culture [1]. If you want the broadest second pick, *The Map of Knowledge* adds a useful frame for how ideas survive, move, and compound across institutions [3].

Sources

1. The AI paradox: More automation, more humans, more work | Dan Shipper
2. X post by @bgurley
3. X post by @balajis
4. X post by @NewsHour