The Great Conversation

What's important to think about and to learn didn't conveniently appear between the covers of a textbook. Finding what's important is much more of a search, a hunt, than that. That's because everyone talks. And most people who have something important to say, write. Just look at Wikipedia, or Arts & Letters Daily, or SI.com. Talk, talk, talk. Words and more words.

Fortunately for us, the best publishers – those who want to print important or excellent talk – have editors sort through all the words and select only the very best.

The Great Conversation is a characterization of references and allusions made by authors in the Western canon to the works of their predecessors. As such it is a name used in the promotion of the Great Books of the Western World published by Encyclopædia Britannica Inc. in 1952. It is also the title of (i) the first volume of the first edition of this set of books, authored by Robert Maynard Hutchins, and (ii) an accessory volume to the second edition (1990), authored by Mortimer Adler.

According to Hutchins, "The tradition of the West is embodied in the Great Conversation that began in the dawn of history and that continues to the present day".[1] Adler said, "What binds the authors together in an intellectual community is the great conversation in which they are engaged. In the works that come later in the sequence of years, we find authors listening to what their predecessors have had to say about this idea or that, this topic or that. They not only harken to the thought of their predecessors, they also respond to it by commenting on it in a variety of ways."[2]

http://www.thegreatideas.org/libeducation.html  The Great Conversation by Robert Hutchins

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