And Now for Something Completely Different...
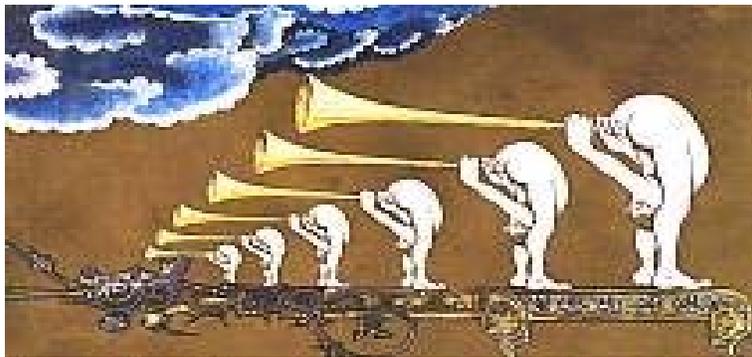
Monty Python: An Annotated Bibliography

Karen Long
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Dr. Jim Carmichael
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Scope:

Monty Python was a British comedy troupe that entered the satire scene in the 1960s during a time of great cultural change in Britain. The group identified with 1960s anti-authoritarianism, and their popularity grew due to their unconventional and rebellious nature. The six members of the group were Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, Michael Palin and Terry Gilliam. The first five were the main live performers, while Gilliam, the only American, provided the group's famous animations. The group had a large impact on the course of British satire, and influenced many comedians, especially in the United States. Although the Monty Python members have not collaborated on a project together in years, their comedy lives on. Particularly in America, Monty Python has developed a large cult following. This bibliography will guide those researching the group and its history. The most valuable material can be found in monographs while journals, newsletters, and bibliographic sources can also be of assistance. However, one must take some sources, particularly journals, lightly because not all of them contain accurate information. Reliable non-print sources include DVDs, which are quite useful because they contain special features that enable one to find out a lot of background information and trivia.

Introduction:

       Monty Python entered the British comedy scene at a time in which satire was reawakening in post-war Britain. This trend began in the 1950s when political life came under scrutiny. At this time, the members of Monty Python were experiencing a strict middle-class upbringing. Such an existence of adhering to conformity could very well have set the foundation for the off-the-wall nature of their comedy. The 1960s progressed with turbulent change, and satirical comedy from radio shows like *The Goon Show* to stage productions such as *Beyond the Fringe* set the stage for a continued breaking of tradition. *The Goon Show* was written by Spike Mulligan, who performed with Peter Sellers and Harry Seacombe. It remains unsurpassed for inventiveness, sheer craziness, and an explosive use of the medium which did not so much break conventions as trample them underfoot.[1] Monty Python members have cited the Goons as a significant comedic influence on a variety of occasions. Python was so clearly modeled after the Goons that even the Pythons themselves admit near-plagiarism.[2] The satire boom of the 1960s continued with the emergence of *Beyond the Fringe*, which had its origins in Cambridge University's Footlights club. Peter Cook, Dudley Moore, Alan Bennett, and Jonathan Miller were among the chief players of the onstage phenomenon, which swept the United Kingdom and parts of Scotland.

       Not much later, Graham Chapman, John Cleese, and Eric Idle also joined The Footlights. The club was founded over a century ago at Cambridge in order to stage local performances. Less formal concerts would also be given, called "smokers", which took

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[1] Roger Wilmut. *From Fringe to Flying Circus*. (Meuthen London Ltd.: London, 1980.), xvii

[2] Roger E. Rowlings. *England, Year Zero: Satire in Postwar British Popular Culture*. (City University of New York: New York, 2004.), 187

place within college walls and in front of all-male audiences.[3] Graham Chapman was the first to arrive at Cambridge, with the intent to study medicine. John Cleese, who there studying law, was inducted into the Footlights at the same time Chapman was. While in the Footlights, Chapman and Cleese gradually became friends, and then writing partners. However, they did not appear onstage together for the first time until 1962, during the production of *Double Take*. *Double Take* included a lot of euphemisms for death that foreshadowed the famous "Dead Parrot" sketch found in Monty Python's acclaimed television series, *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. During this same year, Eric Idle was inducted into the Footlights after he had staged his own smoker. Idle first met Cleese at another Pembroke smoker when he performed one of the sketches that Cleese had written. At this time, Cleese was a regular in the show *A Clump of Plinths*, which later changed its name to *Cambridge Circus*. Chapman was also an alternate in the show, and divided his time between that and his internship at St. Bart's Hospital. Cleese was also writing sketches for David Frost's show *That Was the Week that Was* on the BBC. Frost was a fellow Footlights member. *That Was the Week that Was* went on the air in 1962, and was unlike any show that had been on TV before—a mixture of commentary, sketches, songs, blackouts, film, debate, and a glimpse of the Sunday papers.[4] Cleese took leave from the BBC to tour with *Cambridge Circus*, along with Chapman, during its stints in New Zealand and New York. In 1964, the group from *Cambridge Circus* was reassembled to do the radio program entitled, *I'm Sorry, I'll Read That Again*. The Pythons that participated were not overly fond of the series because it worked with puns and contained stock characters. Idle, meanwhile, was still busy with the Footlights; he wrote, directed, and performed in the 1964 revue. He also went on to become president of the Footlights in 1965, and changed the bylaw to allow women into the group.

While the Cambridge Footlight revues were in full swing, the other half of the future Pythons were involved in productions at Oxford. Terry Jones first saw fellow classmate Michael Palin when Palin did performances with Robert Hewison. The two would frequently run double acts in a club run by the Oxford Union. Jones teamed up with them, and they did cabaret routines around Europe. Much like Chapman and Cleese, Palin and Jones actively collaborated with one another. Their first cooperative effort was a show entitled *Loitering Within Tent*. Cleese and others from Cambridge also admired the collaboration, and asked permission to perform it. Jones and Palin then worked together in The Oxford Revue Group, which was a near equivalent of the Footlights. When Jones was offered a writing job for a theatrical documentary called *The Love Show*, he asked Palin to collaborate, remembering how well they had worked together at Oxford. Here, their partnership really took hold, even though the script for *The Love Show* never was fully produced. Both Palin and Jones continued to collaborate on other scripts, such as *The Ken Dodd Show*, *The Billy Cotton Bandshow*, and other BBC shows.[5]

While five of the Pythons were getting their feet wet at Cambridge and Oxford, Terry Gilliam was attending Occidental College in California. Comic books had always influenced him growing up, particularly *Mad* magazine. During his time at Occidental, he was honing his skills as a cartoonist on the school's humor magazine. He ended up sending some of his work to *Help!* magazine. The founder of the magazine liked his

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[3] Kim "Howard" Johnson. *The First 28 Years of Monty Python*. (St. Martin's Griffin: New York, 1999), 4

[4] George Perry. *Life of Python*. (Canada: Little Brown & Company, 1983.), 26.

[5] *The Encyclopedia of Television*. 2004, 2nd Ed., s.v. "Michael Palin."

work, and offered Gilliam a job after he finished college. During his stint at *Help!*, he encountered John Cleese for the first time, who was doing promotional work for *Cambridge Circus*. A few years later, several failed ventures at other magazines caused him to give John Cleese a call and inquire about possible jobs in television. Cleese suggested that he contact Humprhey Barclay, who had produced *I'm Sorry, I'll Read That Again*.

In 1966, John Cleese was again contacted by David Frost, who was recruiting others, including Palin and Jones, to write for a show called *The Frost Report*. Cleese also invited Chapman along, due to their past collaborative successes. Eric Idle co-wrote material with Tim Brooke-Taylor for the show as well. *The Frost Report* thus marks the beginning of all the Python members, apart from Gilliam, working together on the same project. The show had a format much like that of Saturday Night Live, in which all the writers would meet weekly to come up with sketches. Such collaborative sessions allowed the Pythons to grow accustomed to discussing ideas with one another. Despite the prestige attached to *The Frost Report*, it was actually a fairly conventional show, and the frustrations Cleese, Idle, Jones, Palin, and Chapman developed doing shows like *The Frost Report* would eventually lead to *Monty Python's Flying Circus*.[6]

Before *Flying Circus* occurred however, Cleese, Chapman, Palin, Jones and Idle collaborated on separate projects. Cleese and Chapman were involved in *At Last the 1948 Show*, for which they were both writers and actors. For the first time, they were given a significant amount of control, which enabled them to incorporate sillier and riskier aspects into their comedy. Meanwhile, Palin and Jones were working on *Do Not Adjust Your Set*, a children's program, which proved just as vital to the development of Monty Python. As Jones explains, the allure for most of them was the chance to perform their own material on a regular basis.[7] Eric Idle and Terry Gilliam contributed to the show as well. Gilliam was recruited after he had contacted Humphrey Barclay at John Cleese's suggestion. Idle, Palin, and Jones were also involved with other projects that allowed them to further hone their writing skills. Chapman and Cleese also had this opportunity in *How to Irritate People* which they wrote specifically for David Frost, who wanted to break British humor into the United States. Michael Palin was recruited to act in some of the sketches.

Chapman and Cleese were interested in working with Palin in a more permanent context. Palin said he would agree if Jones could also come along. Idle and Gilliam were also added due to their contributions to *Do Not Adjust Your Set*. Barry Took, a producer and father figure to many of the younger writers and performers at the BBC, felt that combining the Cleese-Chapman team with Palin and Jones would be a worthy experiment.[8] They ended up with a contract for thirteen shows in the late night slot. The six men gelled pretty readily, especially since they were already familiar with each other's work. The biggest obstacle they encountered was finding a name for the show, mostly because it had no plot. After much deliberation, they compiled a long list of very strange titles, some of which included "It's Them!", "Megapode's Panic Show," "Owl

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[6] Johnson. p. 23

[7] ibid. p. 27

[8] ibid. p. 33

Stretching Time," "The 37 Foot Flying Circus" and "Ow! It's Colin Plint." [9] Eventually, *Monty Python's Flying Circus* won out. Interestingly enough, the group has been known as Monty Python ever since, even though the name began with no affiliation other than being part of the television show's title.

       Monty Python's Flying Circus first aired in 1969 and ran until 1974. It was very much like *The Goon Show* without the punch lines, and emerged at a time of great change in British culture. What made the series revolutionary in this context was its lack of convention and willingness to take risks. The show's catchphrase, "And now for something completely different…" epitomizes the show's objective to stray from the norm and to disconcert viewers. Some of its most famous sketches include "Ministry of Silly Walks," "Proust," and "Spam." The series followed a very loose format, with sketches that had no discernable beginnings or ends. Some skits were even interrupted by the dropping of a "16-ton weight." Terry Gilliam's animations were intertwined as quasi-transitions. Opening title sequences were not always found at the beginning of the program, frequently appearing instead midway through the show or even later.[10] In this way, it mocked the conventions of television. Another unique aspect of the show was its blatant defiance of authoritative figures in politics, religion, and British society as a whole. This is probably best demonstrated in the sketch entitled, "Upper Class Twit of the Year," in which the twits participate in an Olympic-like event that requires them to jump over matchsticks, crash a car, wake up a neighbor, take a bra off a mannequin, and finish by shooting themselves in the head. Another comedic strategy that Monty Python developed during this period was the use of word play. In the famous sketch entitled, "Dead Parrot," a customer, played by John Cleese, tries to return a dead parrot to the man who sold it to him. The salesman, played by Michael Palin, in turn tries to convince him that the bird is still alive to avoid accountability. Exasperated, Cleese takes the bird, dashes it to the floor, and shouts in exasperation: "This parrot is no more. It has ceased to be. It's expired and gone to meet its maker. This is a late parrot. It's a stiff. Bereft of life, it rests in peace. If you hadn't nailed it to the perch, it would be pushing up the daisies. It's rung down the curtain and joined the choir invisible. This is an ex-parrot."[11] The majority of the words that Cleese uses in the sketch are various euphemisms for death, thus demonstrating the ability of the Pythons to manipulate the lexicon. The show also played with a variety of different genres, including history, Shakespeare, and cinema. For instance, "The Spanish Inquisition" sketch incorporates historical drama into a comedic context. The sketch itself involves three men, dressed as cardinals during the Spanish Inquisition, who burst into an English drawing room circa 1912. They enter boasting that "Nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition," claiming surprise as their chief weapon. The sketch then gradually dissolves into a scene of ineptitude. Finally, the show dealt with various gender issues. "The Lumberjack Song," for instance, tarnishes images of masculinity by assimilating a lumberjack with behaviors that would be considered feminine. The Pythons also would frequently dress in drag as characters later known as

[9] ibid. p. 49

[10] *The Encyclopedia of Television*. 2004, 2nd Ed., s.v. "Monty Python's Flying Circus"

[11] Marcia Landy. *Monty Python's Flying Circus: TV Milestones Series* (Wayne State University Press, 2005), 94

"Pepperpots." During this time, Monty Python released a book, edited by Eric Idle, entitled, *Monty Python's Big Red Book*. The book is a collection of animation stills and famous elements from *Flying Circus* sketches, and ended up being challenged by censors.

As *Flying Circus* grew in popularity, the BBC began to be concerned with the show's questionable content, and pressures for censorship continued to increase. In addition, "Moral Majority" groups such as Mary Whitehouse's National Viewers and Listeners Association mounted opposition to the program.[12] The show started to contend with being placed in later night slots. At first the Pythons would make fun of such censorship, but after awhile it began to take a toll. To add to this, John Cleese was beginning to tire of the series. The last season of *Flying Circus* was filmed without Cleese, who only contributed as a writer. At this point also, no one was willing to show it in the States, which caused Vic Lownes, a playboy executive, to want to buy the series. He suggested the Pythons re-shoot their best sketches and make them into a film. The result of this was Monty Python's first film, *And Now for Something Completely Different…*Soon after, *Flying Circus* aired in Canada, but the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation took it off the air for its questionable material. This caused protest from many Canadians. After this, ABC, needing to fill a 90-minute slot for its *Wide World of Entertainment*, bought the rights to *Flying Circus*. However, they censored a lot of the material without permission from Monty Python. In December of 1975, the Pythons sued ABC on the grounds that ABC "substantially altered the artistic nature" of their material by "deleting substantial" portions and that the remaining excerpts did "not truly represent the entertainment talents" of the group.[13] The Pythons ended up winning the lawsuit, and *Flying Circus* continued to be released in the States. The group even appeared on *The Tonight Show*, but since their work wasn't yet widely known, they were met with skepticism. However, the unconventional and rebellious nature of Python comedy quickly appealed to America in its cultural defiance following the Vietnam War. In the years since, the group has developed a wide cult following here in the States.

Though some of the members of Monty Python started on solo projects after *Flying Circus* went off the air, they collaborated together on three films. *Monty Python and the Search for the Holy Grail* came out in 1975, and marks the directorial debuts of Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones. It was the first time Python had collaborated on a narrative plot, which is a satire of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. After the knights decide that Camelot is a silly place, God sets them on the quest to find the Holy Grail. Even though the plot that follows is somewhat linear, it contains some vintage Python randomness. For instance, one scene involves a witch trial, in which a group of men decide that if the woman in question weighs the same as a duck, and a duck weighs more than wood, then she is a witch. The Knights also come across some Frenchmen who taunt them from atop a castle with insults such as "Your mother was a hamster" and "I fart in your general direction." One of the knights, Sir Robin, is not as brave as the rest, and his minstrels aptly sing a song entitled "Brave Sir Robin." Some of the lyrics include, "He was not in the least bit scared to be mashed into a pulp, or to have

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[12] ibid. p.23

[13] Douglas L. McCall. *Monty Python: A Chronological Listing of the Troupe's Creative Output, and Articles and Reviews about Them, 1969-1989.* (McFarland and Company, Inc.: Jefferson, NC, and London, 1991), 43

his eyes gouged out…his head smashed in and his heart cut out and his liver removed and his bowels unplugged, and his nostrils raped and his bottom burned off, and his penis split…"[14] The knights also do battle with a killer rabbit, and end up using a Holy Hand Grenade to kill it. The grenade has special instructions; one must say "One, two, three" before they hurl the grail; Arthur instead says, "One, two, five." Monty Python had trouble getting financial backing for the film, but musicians such as the group *Led Zeppelin* and George Harrison of *The Beatles*, who had been big fans of *Flying Circus*, helped them out.

George Harrison, through his company *Handmade Films*, also assisted Monty Python financially during their next film, *Monty Python's Life of Brian*. It was directed by Terry Jones and Peter Biziou. The plot centers around an ordinary man named Brian, whose life directly parallels that of Jesus. It takes place during the time of Christ, and Python pokes fun at leprosy, stonings, and the Roman Empire. The film does not contain jokes about Jesus, but instead attacks organized religion as a whole. However, the movie still came under fire from various religious groups, including Catholics and Jews. The film was also considered blasphemous, which was a huge crime in Britain that the Pythons went on trial for. Graham Chapman's nudity scene also caused a lot of alarm.

Their last film, *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life,* proved to be the most difficult to produce. At that point, all the Python members were engrossed in their solo projects and didn't have as much energy to put into writing a script. They were struggling because although they had a lot of sketches written, they had no central theme with which to link them. They were also beginning to run out of money, so they put on some live shows, including *Monty Python Live at the Hollywood Bowl*; George Harrison again came to the rescue and produced it. The live show included sketches from *Flying Circus*, which had gained immense popularity in the United States by that time. To further their financial backing, they released their *Contractual Obligation Album*, the first collection of material that the Pythons created expressly for a record, and it relied more on songs than sketches.[15] The British Television Network refused to advertise the album because it contained songs like "Sit on My Face" and "I Bet You They Won't Play This Song on the Radio." When *The Meaning of Life* finally came out in 1982, it received mixed reviews. The film spans the whole range of the human experience. It starts with the birth of a seemingly insignificant person, who indeed plays no further part in the film, and progresses though sketches involving a large family of Catholics who refuse to use birth control, sex education in schools, and the Grim Reaper visiting a dinner party involving food poisoning from salmon mousse. A lot of the scenes are quite grotesque.

Meaning of Life was Monty Python's last film for a couple of reasons. First, by the time the movie came out, the group members were actively pursuing solo projects, which they had been doing ever since *Flying Circus* went off the air. John Cleese wrote and starred in the British comedy series *Fawlty Towers* with Connie Booth, his first wife. The plot centers around a disgruntled hotel owner, his wife, their staff, and the various perils they encounter. Cleese then went on to direct and star in the movie *A Fish Called Wanda*, also starring Michael Palin, which received an Oscar nomination. Subsequently, he has written several books, such as *Life and How to Survive It* and *Families and How to*

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[14] *Monty Python's SpamALot*—song lyrics

[15] McCall, p. 82

Survive Them, which contain dialogues with his therapist about the underpinnings of society. Cleese also founded a company called Video Arts, which gives instructional videos on how to improve organizational management; one of these is entitled *Meetings, Bloody Meetings*. He has also starred in various American films and is currently touring in a one-man show around the world. In the mid 1970s, Palin and Jones collaborated on a British comedy series entitled *Ripping Yarns,* which spoofed stories considered typical of British literature and culture. Jones directed a few films, such as *Personal Services* and *Erik the Viking*, and also wrote a lot of books, including some for children. He is currently touring the United States promoting his book, *Who Murdered Chaucer?: A Medieval Mystery*. Palin meanwhile has also written a fair share of books. He is also famous for narrating a lot of travel documentaries for the BBC, some of which are entitled *Around the World in 80 Days, Full Circle,* and *Himalaya*. After *Flying Circus,* Eric Idle produced and starred in *Rutland Weekend Television*, a weekly half-hour comedy show based on the small English county of Rutland. Out of this came the fictional rock group, "The Rutles," which was a parody of The Beatles. The Rutles released a single entitled, "All You Need is Cash" which was nominated for a Grammy award for Best Comedy Record.[16] A few years ago, Idle composed a musical version of *Monty Python's Search for the Holy Grail* that has evolved into the Broadway hit *SpamALot*, which received this year's Tony Award for Best Musical. After *Holy Grail* came out in 1975,Terry Gilliam continued a career in directing, starting with *Jabberwocky,* which was a grotesque version of Lewis Carroll's poem. Michael Palin also starred in the film. Gilliam then directed *Time Bandits* and *Brazil*. During production of *Brazil*, Universal studios wanted to cut a lot of the footage. When Gilliam refused, the studio blocked release of the film. Gilliam counteracted by showing the movie to some film critics, and the movie was eventually nominated for an Oscar. Gilliam also directed *The Fisher King, 12 Monkeys, Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, and his most recent film was *The Brothers Grimm*. Meanwhile, Graham Chapman co-wrote a movie called *Yellowbeard* in 1982, which was a satirical pirate movie that also starred John Cleese and Eric Idle. He also wrote *A Liar's Autobiography*, which came out a year before that. His main motivation for writing was it a fear of mortality, due to his lifelong battle with alcoholism. Due to Chapman's untimely death in 1989 of throat cancer, the Pythons' ideas for future projects together inevitably went by the wayside. Although Chapman's death marked the end of an era, the comedy of Monty Python lives on, particularly in American culture, where new generations are being exposed to it.

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[16] ibid. p. 66

Subject Headings

Monty Python covers a wide variety of genres within the entertainment field. The following subject headings are most useful in terms of relevance and precision of recall:

Comedians -- Great Britain -- Biography.

Theater -- Great Britain -- History -- 20th century.

Comedy programs -- Great Britain -- History.

Comedy films -- Great Britain -- History and criticism.

Satire, English -- History and criticism.

Television Comedies – Great Britain

LCSH:

Satirists *(May Subd Geog)*
BT Humorists
   English Wit and Humor

UF English Satirists

Comedians *(May Subd Geog)*
BT Actors/ Entertainers

Television *(May Subd Geog)*
BT Television Programs

UF Programs, Television Shows

NT Television Comedies

USE Television Comedy
     Television Comedy Writers

Films

BT Comedy/Farce

Classification Numbers

Library of Congress:

PN 1992, and PN6173-PN6175 proved the most fruitful in terms of number of titles retrieved.

PN1992.655—Literature and television
PN1992.66—Performing arts and television
PN20-29—Literature—Societies, etc.
-PN22—American and English
PN6173-PN6175—English Wit and Humor (collections)
PR2976—Early Modern and Elizabethan—History and Criticism

Dewey:
General and specific listings on this subject are varied.

791—Public Performances
791.456—Television Programs
792—Stage Presentations
822—English Drama
827— English satire & humor

Journals and Newsletters Associated with Monty Python:

The Daily Llama—This is an online newsletter that can be found on pythonline.com.
It is a viable news-source for all things Python

IT'S Magazine—a fanzine produced by American Mensa Monty Python SIG

Completely Different—club newsletter of Penn State Monty Python Society

Help!—magazine where Terry Gilliam worked as an editor

The London Times—good for archival information

Entertainment Weekly—has provided some useful Monty Python articles

Rolling Stone—particularly useful for older Monty Python material

<u>Associations in relation to Monty Python:</u>

American Mensa Monty Python SIG   *SPAM—Sydney Python Appreciation Movement*

Penn State Monty Python Society   *FOUL—Friends of Unnatural Llamas*

The Ministry of Silly Walks   *Monty Python Appreciation Society*

MSVU Society for Popular Media

<u>Publishers that frequently provide material on Monty Python:</u>

Meuthen Ltd.—London

St. Martin's Press—New York

<u>Useful Monty Python Sources:</u>

<u>Dictionaries:</u>

"Pythonesque *adjective*" *The Oxford Dictionary of English* (revised edition). Ed. Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson. Oxford University Press, 2005. *Oxford Reference Online*.

The adjective "pythonesque" has been added to the Oxford Dictionary of English. Pythonesque is defined as denoting or resembling the absurdist or surrealist humor or style of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. This source shows the dramatic impact that Python comedy has had on both culture and the English lexicon. Other dictionaries that contain this definition include *The New Oxford American Dictionary*, and the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*.

"Monty Python's Flying Circus" *The Oxford Dictionary of Modern Quotations*. Ed. Elizabeth Knowles. Oxford University Press, 2002. *Oxford Reference Online*.

For those looking for quotations from Monty Python's Flying Circus, this dictionary provides some famous ones, including those from the "Dead Parrot" and "Spanish Inquisition" sketches. Under the dictionary's heading for "Catchphrases," Python's famous quote, "And Now for Something Completely Different" is listed. Thus, this source would be useful for ready reference questions regarding the specifics of quotes used in Flying Circus and is useful for Python fans who want to memorize them.

Bibliographies and Indexes:

I could only find a few bibliography and index sources dealing specifically with Monty Python. However, a lot of useful bibliographic information is provided in subject encyclopedias, monographs, and biographies.

Film Literature Index. Film & Television Documentation Center. [Online Database],
 2005.

The *Film Literature Index* annually indexes 150 film and television periodicals, ranging from scholarly to popular resources. As a result, it is able to provide a central location for journal and magazine articles about Monty Python, from interviews with the group members to reviews about their films and books. It also includes reviews to various monographs about Monty Python. In the advanced search option, one can filter out the popular magazine articles and strictly look for peer-reviewed journals on the subject. This database is thus useful for those who want to cite significant articles about Python.

Gifford, Denis. Ed. *The British Film Catalogue*. 3rd Ed. 2001

This is a catalog of British films, and includes those that were completed but not necessarily released. Each film entry explains who produced, directed, and provided music. A brief synopsis of each plot is also included. A helpful alphabetical index of films organized by title enables readers to pinpoint all the films that Monty Python produced. The index is arranged by entry instead of page number. One must be careful, however, because the film *And Now For Something Completely Different...* is included under "A" while the rest of the Monty Python films are listed under "M". It also includes solo project films such as Terry Gilliam's *Jabberwocky*. Finally, it lists factual films such as newsreels and documentaries; unfortunately Michael Palin's documentaries are not included.

McCall, Douglas L. *Monty Python: A Chronological Listing of the Troupe's Creative
 Output, and Articles and Reviews about Them, 1969-1989.* McFarland and
 Company, Inc.: Jefferson, NC, and London, 1991.

This is a very useful and comprehensive bibliography of Monty Python, which is a rare find. The information in this book is taken from Python-related books, magazine and newspaper articles, and television. The author also consulted sources such as *Halliwell's Film Guide* and *Video Movie Guide*. Each event is listed in chronological order, with important names boldly highlighted in each entry. A comprehensive index of events is included at the end of the work, which allows the reader to pinpoint an event if he or she does not know the year it occurred. Like other bibliographies in the humanities, it is organized by entry rather than page number. The only slight disadvantage is trying to pinpoint aspects such as skits in *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, because the show has a lot of different entries, arranged in order by episode. Nonetheless, the author takes the

time to list the sketches in each episode, which is somewhat useful. The best part is that it lists journal articles, reviews and trivia about Monty Python in a centralized source. It even includes an appendix of the business training films that John Cleese did for Video Arts, which is very helpful because they are difficult to find listed in a central location.

Handbooks, Miscellaneous Ready Reference:

Halliwell, Leslie. *Halliwell's Film and Video Guide.* HarperCollins Publishers: Great
     Britain, 2003.

For those interested in finding a central source for statistics and reviews on Monty Python's films, this handbook is quite useful. It contains an alphabetical film guide, academy award winners, four-star films by title and by year, and an index of leading directors. In the alphabetical film guide, all four Monty Python films are listed. Each entry contains a brief synopsis, an excerpt from a review, and lists the cast, producers, editors and music composers (where applicable). The only disadvantage is that the films are not listed together because Python's first movie, *And Now for Something Completely Different...*is listed under "A". Terry Gilliam is listed in the index of leading directors. His entry lists the films he directed, with their corresponding years. This ready reference source is also useful for those who want to categorize Python's films by year.

International Television & Video Almanac. New York: Quigley, 1987-.

This source contains brief biographical sketches of all the Pythons, except for Chapman, who is omitted from some of the later volumes. As well as brief biographical information, one can find all the television shows, projects, and acting ventures that the group members have participated in since Monty Python. Some accounts do not go into as much depth as others; for instance, the entry on Terry Jones does not contain much detail outside of his writing, television and film credits. This source is nonetheless useful because it provides dates for awards won, and distinguishes between acting movie credits and writing movie credits. It also credits miscellaneous home videos. This source is thus useful when answering ready reference questions.

Encyclopedias:

Reliable encyclopedic information on this subject is hard to find. The entries in general encyclopedias include less material than subject encyclopedias. Even in subject encyclopedias, reliable sources are difficult to come by.

General Encyclopedias:

"John Cleese," "Graham Chapman," "Barry Took," "George Harrison." *Encyclopædia Britannica* from Encyclopædia Britannica Online. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9000664> [Accessed October 5, 2005].

Although the encyclopedia does not include Monty Python as a group, it includes a detailed article on John Cleese and a brief biographical sketch of Graham Chapman. A keyword search also brings up the name of Barry Took, who persuaded the BBC to hire the six young Pythons for *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. The entry on George Harrison explains how his company *Handmade Films* provided money for both *Monty Python's Life of Brian* and Terry Gilliam's *Time Bandits.* The information included in this encyclopedia is unbiased, but not overly thorough.

"Monty Python's Flying Circus," "Cleese, John." *Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*. Scholastic Library Publishing, 2005 <http://libproxy.uncg.edu:2239> [Accessed October 5, 2005].

Grolier's includes a very brief article on *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and a brief biographical sketch of John Cleese. The encyclopedia receives all its information from *The Pythons: Autobiography by the Pythons*. Not all the information in this article is accurate, however; it states that Monty Python made three films, when they actually made four. This is a common mistake to make because Python's film *And Now for Something Completely Different...* is not indexed in the same place as their other three films. Nonetheless, this encyclopedia provides a launching point from which one can do more research, particularly if they consult the Python autobiography that is referenced.

Subject Encyclopedias:

"Monty Python's Flying Circus", "Cleese, John" and "Palin, Michael."*The Encyclopedia of Television*. 2004, 2nd Ed., s.v.

The Encyclopedia of Television does well to give a concise overview of Monty Python's Flying Circus, and is useful for background information in Monty Python research. In its focus on *Flying Circus*, it explains how it was a nontraditional program on the BBC in that its style was sarcastic, satirical, and most importantly, non-linear. It provides background information on the cast, the content of the program and its title sequences, and explains how the show expanded into other media. Finally, it informs the reader of the circumstances of the show's introduction to American television. Helpful footnotes at the end help direct the reader to biographical sketches of John Cleese and Michael Palin in separate articles of the encyclopedia. Michael Palin's biographical sketch maps out the highlights of his career and lists his television, film, stage and publication credits chronologically by year. The article on John Cleese follows much the same format,

except it goes into much more detail about his pre-Python days, focusing specifically on his successes at Cambridge and the BBC. It also focuses on sketches in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* that he is famous for. The encyclopedia also includes a cross-reference to a separate article on *Fawlty Towers*. Both Cleese's and Palin's sketches end with paragraphs that are much in the form of a "Who's Who" article. These statistics include schools they attended, names of their family members, as well as other useful information. The encyclopedia as a whole does well to provide valuable bibliographic information for those who want to study Python in more depth.

"Monty Python's Life of Brian."*Movies of the 70's*. Jurgen Muller, Ed. Taschen: London,
        1994.

Although not a subject encyclopedia per se, this source acts in the same manner as an encyclopedia. Mainly, it provides full-color photos and synopses of films from the 1970's, and has a particularly good article on *Monty Python's Life of Brian*. Along with a brief synopsis, the article includes little known facts such as the cameo appearance of George Harrison, who rescued the project financially at the last minute. The article also mentions how Harrison also footed money toward films such as *Time Bandits* and *Monty Python Live at the Hollywood Bowl*. However, the full-color photos are really what make this source unique. Full-color images from *Brian* depict various scenes, as well as one that was cut from the final version of the film. An excerpt from a review in *The New York Times* is also included. This source goes into a bit more depth than a film index does, which makes it useful for those looking for obscure information. Censors should beware however…some of the photos from other 1970s movies contain nudity.

Biographies:

Contemporary Authors Online, Gale, 2005. Reproduced in *Biography Resource Center*.
        Farmington Hills, Mich.: Thomson Gale. 2005.
        http://libproxy.uncg.edu:2088/servlet/BioRC

This source gives links to in-depth biographical accounts of each Python member except Terry Jones. However, it does include a list of magazine articles that are associated with Jones, as well as with the other five members. This proves particularly useful for those attempting to do a bibliography or a pathfinder on Monty Python because it not only gives background information, but also provides direct links to other sources that delve into more depth. It also provides useful biographic information on five of the six Pythons, including awards they received as well as solo projects they ventured on outside of *Flying Circus*. It follows a prose format rather than taking the brief blurb structure found in sources like *Who's Who*. For one looking for a comprehensive list of works by each Python, this source provides a clear, concise, and centralized format of sources ranging from print to multimedia. Because it is updated frequently, its information, while not full-proof, is relatively accurate.

Contemporary Theatre, Film &Television: A Biographical Guide to Featuring
Performers, Directors, Writers, Producers…in the U.S. and Great Britain.
Detroit: Gale, 1984-.

This biographical source, modeled on Gale's *Contemporary Authors,* gives a brief
biographical account of each member of Monty Python. Eric Idle is included in volume 8,
and it lists his life and achievements in a brief *Who's Who* format. It includes his
principal television work, film appearances, recordings, screenplays and books. Graham
Chapman's entry (volume 8) includes the same sort of material plus a bibliography of
obituaries and other sources from his death. John Cleese's entry in volume 27 goes into a
little more depth, and includes the names of his three wives and children (categorized by
marriage). Film and television credits are listed chronologically and are not differentiated
between Monty Python work and solo projects. Terry Jones is listed in volume 29 and his
entry includes screenplay adaptations. Michael Palin's listing is in volume 26 and
contains all his books written through the year 1997. Finally, Terry Gilliam's entry, listed
in volume 31, has his father's occupation and his mother's maiden name. Each
biographical entry includes a section entitled "Other Sources" to aid the reader in finding
out more information about each Monty Python member. The chief downside of this
source is that the Python members are not listed as a group, and each member is listed in
a different volume. However, it contains a lot of bibliographic information about each
Python, which is useful because it is difficult to find indexes and bibliographies on the
group as a whole.

"Gilliam, Terry," "Cleese, John," and "Biziou, Peter." *International Dictionary of Film*
and Filmmakers. 2000, 4th Ed., s.v.

This biographical volume focuses on the film projects of noted directors, actors, and
writers rather than providing purely biographical information. It is useful because it
allows the reader a deeper look into the various films themselves without being bogged
down with excess biographical anecdotes. The most useful aspect of this source is its
well-organized bibliographies. The article on John Cleese focuses mainly on his acting
career outside of his Monty Python fame, and lists publications that he has written
separately from those that are about him. This avoids the confusion that one can find with
other sources that lump publications together under one category. The article on Terry
Gilliam analyzes his work from a strictly directorial standpoint, which is a nice change
because his directing credits are usually overshadowed by information regarding his
involvement with Monty Python. Finally, an article about the director of *Monty Python's*
Life of Brian, Peter Biziou, is also included.

McCabe, Bob (ed.). *The Pythons: Autobiography by the Pythons*. St. Martin's Press: New
York, 2003.

This source has a distinct advantage because it is the most recent and up-to-date. It
includes previously unpublished diary entries, interviews, and over 1000 images and

illustrations. The text is divided into seven sections that detail the Pythons, their biographies, *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, the Python films, Graham Chapman's death, and their subsequent individual projects. What makes this source especially meaningful and accurate is that it was compiled by the Pythons themselves. Although the contents are a bit jumbled, a very useful index guides the reader to certain aspects such as *The Frost Report* and the *Live at the Hollywood Bowl* performances. Some of Michael Palin's rare diary entries are also added into the mix. This source includes a lot of detail about how certain Python projects came to be, and is especially useful for those wanting to cite rare anecdotes that are not found anywhere else.

Chapman, Graham; compiled by Jim Yoakum. *Graham Crackers: Fuzzy Memories, Silly Bits, Outright Lies*. Book-mart Press, United States, 1997.

What makes this source unique is that it is a first-person account, even though it was published eight years after Graham Chapman's death. Fellow Pythons provide amusing prefaces; a foreword by John Cleese, a backward by Eric Idle, and of course, a sideways by Terry Jones. The book acts as a humorous, if not jumbled, "scrapbook" of Graham Chapman's life; he speaks in the first person about his days before, during and after Python. In addition, it includes unreleased comedy sketches and bits of never-before-seen TV scripts, such as one entitled "Our Show for Ringo Starr," co-written with Douglas Adams (*Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*). Adding to the confusion, the last section, entitled "Outright Lies" has five different (out of order) chapters about how to build a birdhouse. Thus, this book is not directed at the fact-checking scholar, but rather to the devout Monty Python fan interested in the humor of Graham Chapman and his (mostly true) tales. He demonstrates this point in his discussion about the writing of his first account, *A Liar's Autobiography*. He says he named it such because "I realized early on that it's almost impossible to tell the truth…because truth changes" (Chapman 1989, 110). The source also provides excerpts from the autobiography in question. Possibly the most frustrating aspect of this source, aside from figuring out how to cite it, is Chapman's convoluted sentence structure. Again, this was probably purposefully left alone to give the reader a sense of Graham's personality rather than provide a structured historical account.

Margolis, Jonathan. *Cleese Encounters*. St. Martin's Press: New York, 1992.

For those who want to study John Cleese in more depth, this source offers a well-researched account of the comedian's life. It is written by a self-described "unreconstructed admirer" of Cleese. The author recounts Cleese's experience in law school at Cambridge, his time in the Footlights revues, and follows his subsequent solo projects after *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. It tells how he co-wrote *Fawlty Towers* with his first wife, Connie Booth, participated in the Video Arts series, and directed, wrote, and started in the hit movie *A Fish Called Wanda*. It includes an in-depth perspective that is not covered in the biographical sketches included in *Contemporary Authors Online,* and has a useful index as well as a bibliography.

Sterritt, David, and Lucille Rhodes, Ed. *Terry Gilliam Interviews*. University Press of
      Mississippi: Jackson, 2004.

This source could almost be categorized in the newspapers and magazine section,
because it contains various interview articles with Terry Gilliam ranging from 1981 to
2002. However, it includes an in-depth biographical sketch, a chronology of Gilliam's
life, and a filmography, thus making it a useful biographical source as well. The
interviews catch him in transitional moments in his life, particularly the article from
1981, where he acknowledges the influence of his fellow Pythons in broadening his
imagination and creativity. Although some articles show him taking a closer look at his
formative years with Monty Python, the main focus of this book is Gilliam's ventures as
a motion picture director. Here, a reader can receive background information on
Gilliam's picture *Brazil* and the connection he makes between *12 Monkeys* and the world
of art. This source is useful both for its currency and for its detailed illustration of
Gilliam's career in directing, which is not covered in as much detail in other places.

Monographs:

These are listed alphabetically within each category.

Python in Relation to British Humor and Other Cultural Contexts:

Creeber, Glen, Ed. *Fifty Key Television Programmes*. Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd.:
      Great Britain, 2004.

This book chronicles some of the television shows that have impacted society on
profound levels. *Monty Python's Flying Circus* is included, with a detailed entry offering
a basic guide to the show's history, its textual and thematic context, and its reception on
both critical and popular levels. The entry is followed by questions designed to help
students be aware of key issues that the program has raised. It is thus an effective study
tool for those who want to find out more about *Flying Circus*.

Hewison, Robert. *Footlights! A Hundred Years of Cambridge Comedy*. Methuen London
      Ltd.: London, 1983.

The main focus of this source is not Monty Python itself, but rather the Footlights
comedy club at Cambridge that John Cleese, Graham Chapman, and Eric Idle joined in
their college days. It provides a useful appendix that lists its officers and leading
contributors. One of the book's main themes is the relationship between the Footlights
performances and the professional arena of comedy. The three Python members are part
of a group of many who have become professional performers, writers, or producers. The
chapter entitled "Cambridge Circus", which focuses on the time period in which the
Python members were a part of the club, states, "Neither Graham Chapman nor John
Cleese found it particularly easy to get into the club" (Hewison 1983, 137). In this way,

the book provides background information about the Python's time in the Footlights that others might not. It even lists links to *Monty Python's Flying Circus*; for instance, the show *Double Take* included euphemisms for death that reappeared in the later "Dead Parrot" sketch. It also contains excerpts from Footlights scripts, photographs, and programs along with the club's reminiscences. Eric Idle provides a both whimsical and informative preface, saying, "The value of the Footlights for me was that, while learning about content, how to write, rewrite, and cut sketch material, you were nevertheless obliged to go out and learn performing in front of quite difficult audiences" (Idle 1982, ix). Thus, this source is perfect for the scholar who wants to find out more about the influences that shaped Python before its *Flying Circus* days.

Hewison, Robert. *Monty Python, the Case Against: Irreverence, Scurrility, Profanity, Vilification and Licentious Abuse*. Grove Press Inc.: New York, 1981.

Monty Python, the Case Against is a thorough, well-documented account of the Pythons' various fights against censorship. It also provides insight into the motives and methods of those who sought to censor and ban Python. It ranges from their early battles on *Flying Circus* to the full-frontal nudity controversy surrounding *Life of Brian*. It also has detailed accounts of the ABC court case in which Python filed a million-dollar lawsuit for unfair competition against their own unedited shows and copyright infringement. There are script excerpts from some of the shows and motion pictures that came under fire, and copies of actual letters from the companies and individuals that challenged the material, which provide valuable insight to the reader. It also cites books by Python that were challenged, such as *Monty Python's Big Red Book*. The only disadvantage to this source is that there is no table of contents or index. Regardless, the material provides invaluable information for those researching censorship in relation to Monty Python.

Landy, Marcia. *Monty Python's Flying Circus: TV Milestones Series*. Wayne State University Press, 2005.

This book is quite resourceful because it goes into detail about *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, and relates it to larger socio-cultural contexts. It begins by explaining the influences the show had both globally and on British culture. It then gives biographical sketches of each Python, followed by a background on the BBC and its attempts to restrict the controversial aspects of the show. It also talks about when the show was introduced to America, and its challenges to the culture, politics, religion, and education of the era. In a section entitled "Antecedents and Influences" it discusses Python's predecessors, including *The Goon Show*. It describes some of the skits of *Flying Circus* in great detail, directly relates them to various television forms, and specifies the show's use of nonsensical words. In a section entitled "Cross-Dressing and Gender Bending" the author describes how Python broke the institutionalized meanings of gender and sexual roles, citing the "The Lumberjack Song" as an example. The show's allusions to Shakespeare, various forms of literature, and cinema are also addressed. A reliable table of contents, extensive index, and bibliography make this a very user-friendly source.

Miller, Jeffrey S. *Something Completely Different: British Television and American Culture*. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2000.

If one wants to study the influence that *Monty Python's Flying Circus* had on American culture, this book provides an extensive analysis. It not only explains why the show was well-received in the United States, it also pinpoints the clear division on the critical commentary regarding it. It shows how *Flying Circus* broke conventions of television, and defied authority in a way that both British and American culture could relate, particularly since the program was introduced in Britain during a time of social change and in the States right after the Vietnam War. It also goes into specifics about the sketches included in *Flying Circus* and directly relates them to both British and American cultural contexts. It is a useful source for those studying the comedy of Monty Python in relation to both American and British arenas.

Nathan, David. *The Laughtermakers*. Peter Owen Ltd.: London, 1971.

This source traces influences on postwar comedy in Britain. Namely, it demonstrates how shows like *That Was the Week That Was*, *The Goon Show*, *Beyond the Fringe*, and *Monty Python's Flying Circus* liberated areas of experience that had until then been taboo on radio and television, particularly in relation to the BBC. "Before such shows were broadcast, what was said on television in Britain was confined to domestic coziness or fantasy, and had left political and social comment alone" (Nathan 1971, 15). It provides an interesting perspective because it was published at a time in which the BBC was standoffish, avoiding direct responsibility for the controversy that these shows caused. It devotes a chapter to Monty Python, entitled, "Monty Python's Flying Breakthrough," and presents Python as direct spin-off of *The Goon Show*. The only disadvantage this source has is that it is not objective, and has a slanted perspective regarding Monty Python. The author gives John Cleese most of the credit for the group's success, and spends most of the chapter on John Cleese's background rather than focusing on the rest of the group. However, for those who want to know more about British satire as a whole or shows that influenced Python, such as *The Goon Show*, this source proves worthy.

Thompson, John O. *Monty Python: Complete and Utter Theory of the Grotesque*. British Film Institute: London, 1982.

For those interested in the grotesque aspect of Monty Python humor, this conglomeration of interviews with Python members and reviews of their productions is a must. It contains 48 bits and pieces of Python grotesquerie from the "Brave Sir Robin" song from *Holy Grail* to "Dismemberment." This source also provides some background information on the Python members. For instance, in an article entitled, "Python Adolescences," an interview with John Cleese explicates that he was overprotected by his parents and that a good deal of the grotesque in his comedy came from a reaction against that system. Such Python anecdotes are supplemented by seemingly random articles such as "Refusing the Uplifting Note." This particular article offers a positive account of progressive nonsense,

which epitomizes Python humor. Thus, this source aims to present the grotesque in a positive light, and also pokes fun at those who dismiss Python for its silliness and inclusion of grotesquerie. On the flip side, it also shows how the Python's forms of humor and grotesque have posed problems. As is typical with a lot of Monty Python sources, this contains neither a table of contents nor index. However, the author does well to include an introduction to each section to explain its significance in relation to Python. At the end, there is a "Pythonography" that lists Python's television, film, and book credits. One must be careful, however, as it does not include any Python-related productions past 1982.

Wilmut, Roger. *From Fringe to Flying Circus*. Meuthen London Ltd.: London, 1980.

Roger Wilmut provides an extensive background of British comedians born in the 1930s and 1940s, drawing on printed works, interviews, and criticisms. As well as giving background detail to comedians such as Peter Sellers, Spike Milligan, and Dudley Moore, the author gives generous attention to all six Python members, including their production staff. Further, it includes information about the climate of British politics and culture that was satirized by comedy troupes like Monty Python. This relation of comedy and social change should be of particular interest to scholars. However, one of the best features of this book is its extensive script excerpts from *The Goon Show*, *Beyond the Fringe*, *Cambridge Circus*, *I'm Sorry I'll Read that Again*, *Do Not Adjust Your Set*, and *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, to name a few. While exhaustive, the book is structured chronologically and is relatively easy to follow if the reader is attempting to find information about specific comedic groups rather than a survey of them as a whole. The illustrations do well to enhance the text, and the index is user-friendly.

Python as Main Focus:

Johnson, Kim "Howard". *And Now For Something Completely Trivia*. St. Martin's Press: New York, 1991.

This book can be utilized as a ready reference source for random Monty Python trivia. For instance, if a library patron is curious about which characters on *Monty Python's Flying Circus* were crushed by the 16-ton weight, or how often each Python dressed in drag, this book can easily provide answers to these questions. The book also includes quizzes and other curious bits of information, including bloopers in both the films and TV shows. The distinct disadvantage it has is that it is not well organized. It does not contain a table of contents or an index, but instead provides randomly titled chapters. Though the source focuses mostly on Flying Circus, it provides little known facts from other Monty Python ventures as well. For instance, the chapter entitled, "The Naked Truth", it tells about which Pythons have taken off their clothes in films. It is important to note that this source is not just directed at fanatical Python followers. It can also be of interest to more casual observers.

Johnson, Kim "Howard". *The First 28 Years of Monty Python*. St. Martin's Press: New
      York, 1998.

This is an updated version of Johnson's book entitled *The First 20 Years of Monty
Python*, which includes exclusive interviews, detailed guides to the Python shows, rare
photos, profiles of each group member, as well as films, books, records, and stage shows.
Johnson has conducted numerous interviews with the Pythons over the years for
magazines and radio. He provides extensive background, tracing back to the Pythons'
days at Cambridge, Oxford, and Occidental, as well as detailed descriptions about how
the group formed and why. The book also includes random trivia, such as a list of the
numerous show names that the group came up with before they decided on *Monty
Python's Flying Circus*. It provides a comprehensive account of *Flying Circus*, listing the
contents of its episodes in great detail. Intertwined also is a list of famous quotes from the
series, listed in alphabetical order by subject. The book also specifies the conflicts that
the group members had with one another, as well as John Cleese's restlessness at the end
of the series. The subsequent lives and projects of the Pythons after the disbanding of
Flying Circus are also carefully mapped out. It includes a background and discography of
Monty Python's recordings, an annotated bibliography of print materials that relate to the
group, and films both that are both by and about the group members. Although directed
mainly at Python fans, one doing research on the subject can find a lot of useful
information as well.

Johnson, Kim "Howard". *Life Before (and After) Python: The Solo Flights of the Flying
      Circus*. St. Martin's Press: New York, 1993.

This source is particularly useful for those wanting to know more about the individual
projects of the Monty Python members. It places Python's individual endeavors in one
source, covering projects before, during, and after *Flying Circus*. Since the majority of
Monty Python sources focus on either *Flying Circus* or their four films, this book is
particularly useful; it saves researchers' time by including information about Python's
individual projects in one centralized location. Not only does it have extensive detail
regarding well-known television shows such as Cleese's *Fawlty Towers* and Palin's and
Jones' *Ripping Yarns*, but it also has lesser known television appearances of Python
members on shows like *Saturday Night Live* and *Hollywood Squares*. It also covers the
travelogues by Michael Palin. The author was careful to make the dates and times as
accurate as possible, which will appeal to researchers looking for consistency. Although
the source contains no table of contents or index, it is subdivided into easily discernable
sections. The first, entitled, "Before Monty Python" covers projects by Cleese and
Chapman during their Cambridge years, and the Oxford performances by Palin and
Jones. It also explicates the BBC shows and independent productions that the members
participated in before their collaboration in *Flying Circus*. The section "The Python
Years" is very brief, included only as a means to show the reader that Monty Python was
most closely-knit during *Flying Circus*. Finally, "After Monty Python" is the most
extensive section, covering all the projects of the Python members starting in 1974 when

Flying Circus went off the air. All the productions are in chronological order and are covered in extensive detail. For those interested in the projects that Graham Chapman never finished due to his untimely death, the last section, entitled, "Remembering Graham Chapman" is also informative.

Morgan, David. *Monty Python Speaks!* First Spike Printing, Avon Books Inc.: New York, 1999.

Monty Python Speaks provides a recent, detailed account of the world of the Pythons through detailed interviews with all surviving Python members and those who are well acquainted with them. It is a good source for those who want an extensive behind-the-scenes look at the more than thirty-year span of Monty Python comedy. It includes their collaborations, struggles, and efforts to expand themselves beyond the Python way of life. The book begins with an introduction that explains the revolutionary concepts of Python comedy, as well as its humor demonstrated through the flow of actions and ideas. It states that Python was not about jokes, but rather portrayed a way of looking at the world through lenses of absurdity. It then gives detailed accounts of significant aspects of Monty Python as a whole, in chronological order, beginning with chapters entitled "Pre-Python" and "Birth", and ending with "21st Century Python." Each chapter begins with a short summary by the author, followed by further elaborations directly quoted from the Python members themselves. In this way, the reader gets a multi-faceted perspective of what life was like for the Python members. It also allows one to get a sense of the group's dynamic because the Pythons give candid accounts about one another. One particular chapter of importance explicates the BBC's issues with Python because of its surrealist ideas. It ends with a detailed episode guide of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*.

Perry, George. *Life of Python*. Canada: Little Brown & Company, 1983.

George Perry gives an accurate third-person account of Monty Python and its relation to British satire and humor. What makes this source unique is its myriad of photographs intermixed with the text which help the contents of the book come to life. Perry begins by giving the reader a background of British humor in the 1930s and 1950s, including an in-depth look at *The Goon Show* and its impacts. This enables the reader to understand how *The Goon Show* was a key influence in midst of the otherwise conventional British humor that was available at the time. Perry also gives an extensive account of The Footlights. As well as providing a history of how the group came together, the author offers brief biographies of each Python. The book follows by explaining the influence Monty Python has had on United States and other cultural arenas. Finally, an extensive "Pythonography" at the end lists the television, book, record, and videocassette credits of the individual Pythons as well as the group as a whole. This source is designed for Monty Python fans, and although it portrays the members of the group in a positive light, it does not idealize them.

Scholarly Journal Articles:

These articles are not focused on Python per se, but rather relate its comedy to other cultural contexts or fields of study. A lot of them used metaphors from Python to relate the main points of their articles to readers. The following examples included the most Python material in relation to their subjects.

Murrell, Elizabeth. "History revenged: Monty Python translates Chretien De Troyes's
      Perceval, or The Story of the Grail (again)." *Journal of Film and Video 50*.
      (Spring 1998): 50-63.

This article aims to demonstrate how the film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* functions as an accurate cultural translation of "Li contes del graal (Perceval, or the Story of the Grail)" by Chretien de Troyes. While its analysis is a bit over-exaggerated, it does provide some interesting viewpoints. It explains that the plot of *Holy Grail* contains elements that relate to certain historical cultural contexts. For instance, it cites the witch-test scene as a demonstration of the inability of characters who consider themselves part of the dominant linguistic group to succeed at communication. The author includes direct quotes from the script to further enhance her points. While this article does not include information about the movie specifically, it emphasizes the historical allusions that Monty Python used in their comedy. For those studying the extent at which Monty Python referenced British history and culture, and for those examining the influences Monty Python has subsequently had on various people and societies, this source proves adept.

Nicholson, David W. "'The Spanish Inquisition' Sketch: A Metaphor for Curriculum
      Reform." *The Clearing House 72*. (March/April 1999). 221-223.

This article uses "The Spanish Inquisition" sketch from *Monty Python's Flying Circus* to serve as a metaphor for the process that educators go through during each new curriculum effort. The article begins by presenting an excerpt from the sketch and then correlates its quotes with different phases of confusion that can occur during curriculum development. "'Uh, nobody, um ... expects .... Nobody expects the, um, Spanish, um ....' Confronted and confounded by vocal critics, the reformers may become flustered, agitated, and unable to succinctly articulate their position. They may even begin to doubt their ability to influence the change process" (Nicholson 1999, 222). This article demonstrates that Python comedy can be applied to almost any context and can be both appreciated for its artistic cleverness and its ability to transcend genres. And, by being utilized as a learning tool for instructors, it can benefit people on a practical level. Thus, educators as well as those looking for examples of how Monty Python transcends comedic contexts would take a particular interest in this article.

Newspaper and Magazine Articles:

Although the majority of newspaper and magazine articles include reviews of Monty Python's works, a few of them contain information about the group itself. Even then, however, not all of them provide accurate information. Here are some that are listed in chronological order from oldest to most recent:

Morley, Sheridan. March 29, 1975. "The Complete and Utter Palin and Jones in a Two
      Man Python Team." *The Times (of London).* Column E: 9. [Digital Archive]

This article features Michael Palin and Terry Jones on the eve of the theater release of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. They both talk about Python, *Holy Grail*, and some of their past history. After the number of sources going on forever about Cleese and Chapman in the Footlights at Cambridge, a focus on the two Pythons from Oxford is a nice change. They both recount how they met and provide useful anecdotes from their pre-*Flying Circus* days on shows like *Late Night Line Up* and *Do Not Adjust Your Set*. They also talk about the variety of writing projects they collaborated on. The article also gives insight to their personal lives at the time, stating that they were both married to girls they met at Oxford. The interview took place in a recording-studio about a Chinese take-out restaurant where the two were working on the *Holy Grail* soundtrack. This source is useful because it provides anecdotes and specific information about Palin and Jones that are not covered in as much detail in monographs.

Waters, Henry F. March 31, 1975. "Pythonmania." *Newsweek*. Entertainment: 72.
      [Electronic]. Lexis-Nexis [2005].

This is a good article that provides background on Monty Python, quotes from their sketches, and includes information about their invasion in the U.S. Although it has a lot of the same information one can find in a monograph, it also contains some rare quotes from Python members that would not be found anywhere else. Since this article was published in the 1970s, it helps the reader get a feel for how Pythons perceived their critics during a time in which a lot of their material was being questioned. "Particularly iconoclastic sketches are frequently interrupted by a Python portraying an irate viewer registering a protest. 'That's part of our self-defense,' explains Terry Jones, who specializes in playing public officials in drag. 'And the show keeps moving so fast that the viewer doesn't have time to formulate a criticism of any of it'" (Waters, 1975, 72). This shows that Python were thumbing their noses at censors even in the beginning, and demonstrates their mocking of those in authority. The article thus acts as a worthy supplement to the Python monographs listed below.

Kaufman, Michael T. April 26, 1975. "Monty Python's Flying Circus is Barnstorming
Here." *The New York Times*. Proquest Historical Newspapers (1851-2002): 29.

This source gives the reader a behind-the-scenes sense of the Pythons. Right before the
release of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, all members except Cleese talk about their
beginnings and which comedians influenced them most. Particularly, Terry Gilliam
eludes to the comic visions of Ernie Kovacs, Graham Chapman talked about the
influences of Stephen Leacock, a Canadian humorist, and the rest allude to Spike
Milligan and *The Goon Show*. The article provides a play-by-play account of Python
silliness, from one Python who laments about how he was kept up all night by crews
painting Central Park green, to another (Palin) who topples Terry Jones into a
wastebasket. However, the article is not completely accurate in its information. For
instance, the writer mentions that Palin went to Cambridge, even though some simple
research on his part would have revealed that Palin went to Oxford. Aside from the slight
inaccuracies, the article does well to capture the Monty Python in their prime.

Gambaccini, Paul. "The Persecution of Monty Python's 'Life of Brian.'" *Rolling Stone.*
(October 1979): 52, 55.

This is a great article for those who want to find out more about the controversy
surrounding *Monty Python's Life of Brian*. It explains how a lot of Christian groups were
against the film, claiming that it was disrespectful toward Jesus. Specifically, the Pythons
state that the film does not contain a bunch of jokes about Jesus; rather, it parodies
organized religion as a whole. It also makes fun of the people that lived during the time
of Christ. Eric Idle explains, "The Sermon on the Mount is really nice and the film
doesn't joke about it. It makes a joke about people. When it happened, people didn't go,
'Shhh, this is the Sermon on the Mount'" (Gambaccini 1979, 52). Apparently, the film
also offended some Jews; the article refers to one particular Rabbi who saw the movie as
a "crime against religion" and who claimed that it would cause an outbreak of violence.
The article also offers information about the movie itself, including a plot synopsis, and
some behind-the-scenes facts. It also provides background on Monty Python itself, citing
some of the group's comedic influences. Graham Chapman cites *Beyond the Fringe*,
telling how he remembers seeing them perform and thinking that he could also do what
they did. Background and specifics on *Monty Python's Flying Circus* are also included.
Finally, the author cites the negative reception that Britain had against the movie, and the
prosecution that Python had to face there. A citizen of Britain, Mary Whitehouse, is cited
for her crusade against Python's eyebrow-raising material.

Pond, Steve. "Monty Python's Holiday in the Sun" *Rolling Stone*. (November 1980): 20-
21, 70.

This source captures Monty Python behind the scenes during the group's performance at
Hollywood Bowl. The article explains that the only reason they were doing a show at
Hollywood Bowl to begin with was because they were stuck in the writing process of

their new movie, the final product of which was *Meaning of Life*. The author provides sufficient and accurate background of the origins of Monty Python, a rarity in a lot of magazine articles. He also explicates the solo projects that each group member was working on at the time, including Chapman's autobiography, Cleese's *Fawlty Towers*, Gilliam's *Time Bandits*, Idle's Rutles single, and Palin's BBC documentary. It also gives background information on Python's *Contractual Obligation Album*, which a British television network refused to advertise. At this point, the Pythons were also still fighting incensed church leaders over the controversy surrounding *Life of Brian*. Finally, the author includes a synopsis of the contents of the Hollywood Bowl performances, such as an inaccurate painting of *The Last Supper*, the famous "Dead Parrott" sketch, and "The Lumberjack Song." This article also compares the positive American reception of Python in 1980 compared to the skeptical reaction after their first appearance on *The Tonight Show*, thus demonstrating the cult following they developed here in the States.

Yarbrough, Jeff. "With an Eye Out for Trouble, Terry Gilliam does Battle over Brazil and Wins an Oscar Nod." *People Weekly.* (March 1986): 141-143.

This article recounts Gilliam's struggle with Universal Studios over his picture *Brazil*. The movie was shelved after Gilliam refused to make the changes that Universal wanted. Gilliam then went behind Universal and screened a private showing of the film for Los Angeles film critics. Brazil was then open for public release, and even received an Oscar nomination. The article demonstrates that Gilliam is not afraid of controversy, and that even his films before *Brazil* were typically brought under fire. It also gives a brief biographical sketch of Gilliam, and provides a glimpse into his life with his wife and kids. Quotes from Michael Palin on Gilliam are also included. The only downside of this article is its slight inaccuracies. It claims that Chapman and Palin were credited with creating Monty Python, which is untrue. However, this account acts as an adequate supplement to the book *Terry Gilliam Interviews*.

Kean, Danuta. "Life of Michael." *Geographical 69.* (September 1997): 40-45

For those who want more information about Michael Palin's traveling documentaries around the world, this source provides background information on his films entitled *Pole to Pole* and *Around the World in 80 Days,* and *Full Circle*. The article's main focus is *Full Circle*, which explains how Palin's 80,400 km journey took nine and a half months from beginning to end, and led him through the Western states of the U.S., Central America, Australia, the former Soviet Union, and the Far East. The illustrations contained in this article enhance the text rather than act as mere fillers, making this article most useful in either PDF or print format. Since information on Palin's documentaries is not typically included in much detail in Monty Python monographs, this source also provides details that other resources do not.

Nunns, Stephen. "And Now for Something Completely Different." *American Theatre 17*. (September 2000): 8

In 2000, a play that Graham Chapman wrote with Barry Cryer premiered in Atlanta, GA. The above article tells about this, and gives background on the play's origin. It was written in the mid-1970s for London's West End, and was discovered in 1998 by Jim Yoakum, co-founder of the Chapman archives and editor of *Graham Crackers: Fuzzy Memories, Silly Bits, Outright Lies*. The article explains how Yoakum was surprised to find it, because he didn't think Chapman wrote for the theater. Even though Chapman died in 1989, the play did very well at the box office. This article is a worthy source because it contains information about Graham Chapman that is not included elsewhere.

Rhodes, Lucille, and David Sterritt. "Monty Python: Lust for Glory." *Cineaste 26.* (Fall 2001): 18-23.

This article came out when a lot of Monty Python's productions were being released on DVD. Though it does not contain any interviews, it provides an adequate summary of Monty Python's comedy up to that point. It also gives accurate background on all the Python members, and explains how the group came to be. Specifically, it addresses Python's comedy is a sociopolitical context, citing specific examples from *Flying Circus* and *Life of Brian*. It also contains photos from *Flying Circus, Holy Grail* and *Life of Brian* that do well to supplement the text. Though a lot of this same information can be found in monographs, the material included in the article gives the reader an overview and background which can aid him or her when studying Python in more depth.

Alexander, Max. "And Now for Something Completely Different." *Smithsonian 35*. (April 2004): 82-84.

This article explains how Monty Python is still immensely popular, even though the six members of the group have not collaborated on a project together in over twenty years. It likens the Pythons to the Beatles, attributing both groups with a sense for risk-taking and mischievousness. It presents a dichotomy between the reception of Python then as opposed to its reception now. Though it gained popularity on the BBC, it took audiences a little while to warm up to it. Once they did however, the response was dramatic. It also briefly mentions the BBC in relation to *Flying Circus*, stating that the BBC had to take a hands-off approach until the show came under scrutiny. The contents of this article are accurate and relatively recent, and provide a good reference to Python's cult following.

Nashawaty, Chris. "The Full Monty: They can walk the silly walk. Now, as Spamalot hits Broadway, the five surviving members of Monty Python talk the silly talk about the highs and lows of their Ni!-slapping collaboration." *Entertainment Weekly*. (March 2005): 40-47.

As Eric Idle's *Spamalot* continues to be a hit on Broadway, the Pythons reflect on their early days in *Flying Circus*, including the time in which the BBC pulled it from the air. Each member also talks about John Cleese's boredom with *Flying Circus* toward the end of its run. They also discuss *Holy Grail*; Jones and Gilliam both elaborate that during that production, they basically learned how to direct as they went along. They then discuss their opinions about Idle's *SpamAlot*. Even though there was some deliberation as to whether or not it should be called *Monty Python's SpamAlot*, the surviving members of the group were keen on the idea of the show for the most part. This demonstrates that the members have relaxed a lot about Python in the years following its disbandment. What makes this source useful is that it provides one of the most recent arenas in which the members of Python are interviewed together.

Katz, Paul; Kofler, Sandra, and Dan Zak. "Without Python We Wouldn't Have…" *Entertainment Weekly*. (March 2005): 44.

In this brief one-page article, famous American stars of today recount how they have been influenced by Monty Python. For instance, Martin Short, of Saturday Night Live fame states, "Their influence was that absurdity in character could replace the punchline, the ba-dum-bum thing" (Katz, Kofler, Zack 2005, 44). Tina Fey, also of Saturday Night Live, explains the stream-of-consciousness flow of sketches that *Flying Circus* had. Matt Groening, creator of the Simpsons, states that he liked their combination of whimsical surrealism with a hint of cruelty. In essence, this article demonstrates the importance of Monty Python comedy, and its profound influence on current American comedians.

Grossberg, Michael. "A Python Passion; Another Generation Watching, Quoting Offbeat Material from British troupe." *The Columbus Dispatch*. (June 2005): 01D

This source demonstrates how Monty Python's comedy is being passed down through generations. Young people of today are quoting material from both the films and sketches, relating to the way Python takes dignity away from situations. The article also talks about how the Broadway show *SpamAlot* is allowing a further revitalization of Python to take place. It also includes a section entitled, "Box Story" that gives an update of the current projects of each Python member.

Scripts:

Chapman, Graham, et. al; edited by Roger Wilmut. *The Complete Monty Python's Flying Circus: All the Words (2 vols.)*. Pantheon Books: New York, 1989.

This source provides the complete scripts of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Each volume has its own table of contents and index. Although the tables of contents list the episodes and their sketches in order, it is difficult to find a particular sketch unless one checks the title index. The index conveniently directs the reader alphabetically to specific sketches such as "The Spanish Inquisition" and "Dead Parrot". In the contexts of the scripts themselves, characters' names, often not spoken, are given with the name of the actual performer added on to their first appearance. Small parts are not clearly identified. The book also has photographs taken from videotapes of the series. The only disadvantage to this source is that most of the cartoon animations in the series are not included. Essentially, it acts as a viable supplement to other sources that specifically provide background on *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, thus enabling the reader to further understand such reference sources.

Chapman, Graham, et. al. *Monty Python's Second Film: A First Draft*. Eyre Meuthen Ltd.: London, 1977.

This script version of *Monty Python and the Search for the Holy Grail* can prove quite useful to either film students or devout Monty Python fans. It is an intricately arranged book on the making of *Holy Grail* that contains the script and tidbits about the filmmaking itself. It begins with the first version of the script, which followed a much different plot, riddled with a lot of edits and revisions. It also includes various other drafts of the script, production notes, daily continuity reports, and photographs taken during filming. Some of the first drafts of Terry Gilliam's animations are also interspersed. Film students can peruse the continuity reports, and determine how filmmakers during the 1960s and 1970s monitored production. Such students can also take note of the complete statement of production costs listed at the end. Python enthusiasts can observe the edits and revisions of the script, and compare them with what they have seen from the film. For instance, in the scene with the Holy Hand Grenade, Arthur originally was supposed to say "One, two, three," in accordance to the Holy Hand Grenade rules, but it was later changed to "One, two, five" for comedic reasons. Those interested in censorship in relation to Python should peruse the letter from Mark Forester explaining how the censor's representative wanted to cut pieces of dialogue, such as "I fart in your general direction." Not only was the line left in, it has become a classic trademark of *Holy Grail*.

Chapman, Graham, et. al. *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life*. Meuthen Ltd.: Great Britain, 1983.

This is the complete script of the film *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life*. It includes many photos and animation stills to supplement the dialogue. The script also includes

sketches entitled "The Adventures of Martin Luther" and "Diana the Waitress", which were cut from the film. It ends with a listing of the cast in order of appearance, which is useful because the Python members each play a variety of roles. What makes this source especially unique is that the final pages contain photocopies of letters between John Cleese and the editor of *The Sun*. *The Sun* wrote an inaccurate story regarding Cleese's manner behind the scenes while filming *Meaning of Life*. Cleese maintained that the newspaper printed a false story about him while the responses from the editor claim that they were accurate. Interestingly enough, Cleese stated that he would like to include the correspondence in the book about the film, to which *The Sun* replied that it did not wish to have it included. The reader can appreciate this extra added behind-the scenes element to the film's script.

Idle, Eric (editor). *Monty Python's The Life of Brian/ MontyPythonscrapbook*. Eyre
      Meuthen, Ltd.: Great Britain, 1979.

This script from the movie *Life of Brian* includes a lot of useful pictures from the movie to aid the reader in the chronology of the plot, which centers on the life of an ordinary man named Brian. His life directly parallels that of Jesus, and Brian is often mistaken for him. The cast (in order of appearance) is listed at the beginning, which helps in deciphering the myriad of characters that each Python member plays. This is a good visual source as a whole because if the reader turns the book upside-down and reads it from the back, it becomes *MontyPythonscrapbook*. A collaboration by all Monty Python members, the scrapbook includes reprints of actual letters between the Pythons, diary entries, and other behind-the-scenes extras. One letter by Graham Chapman to a fellow doctor in London tells how he treated a ureteric colic patient with sodium bicarbonate in the Tunisian desert, were *Life of Brian* was filmed. It also includes the usual random Python silliness, with satirical articles such as "What To Do After the Movie" and "What To Do When You Win a Granny." This source is useful because it allows the reader to look beyond the mere script of the movie and get a sense of what it was like for the Pythons during the film's production.

Doctoral Dissertations:

Larsen, Darl E. *"It's.."Shakespeare: English Renaissance Drama and Monty Python. A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy.* Northern Illinois University Department of English: Dekalb, IL, 2000.

This dissertation is especially unique because relates the cultural influences of Monty Python to those of Shakespeare. Before this account was written, such material could only be found in scattered articles of information. One of the main similarities that the author explicates is that both Monty Python and Shakespeare were not considered proper during their prime, but were later respected and glorified for their contributions to culture and society. Other similarities include the "Englishness" of both Shakespeare and Monty

Python and how they have woven themselves into British customs, traditions, and most significantly, its lexicon. The author also explains that there are contrasts between the two as well. For instance, Shakespeare worked alone, while Python comedy was rarely without collaboration. In the second chapter of the dissertation, the author provides further detail of the cultural assimilation of Shakespeare and Python through direct quotes and references of both artists. In Chapter 3, the aspects of theatricality are approached, including troupe configurations, casting and writing choices. It directly demonstrates similarities between English Renaissance dramatists and Monty Python. Chapter 4 is a discussion of the uses and abuses of history as demonstrated in both Shakespeare and Python; neither of the artists overly adhered to historical accuracy. In Chapter 5, the author takes a close look at the various uses of humor in both Shakespeare and Python, with an emphasis on both direct and indirect satire. The issue of how both Shakespeare and Python included a sense of "other" is explained in Chapter 6. The topics in this section range from anti-theatricality to cross-dressing. Each chapter is structured similarly, which makes it a user-friendly, if not exhaustive, source. At the end of each section, the author includes useful notes in order to make the obscure references included in the section more discernable. Finally, the author does well to bring scholarly importance to the seemingly whimsical topic of Monty Python. This dissertation was later published as a book, entitled, *Monty Python, Shakespeare, and English Renaissance Drama*.

Rowlings, Roger E. *England, Year Zero: Satire in Postwar British Popular Culture*. City University of New York: New York, 2004.

This dissertation aims to make a serious study of English comedies after World War II by explaining their significance in the redefinition of English culture. The main focus is on British satire from 1947 to 1953 and how it was key to the English post-war 'non'-recovery period. As a result, Monty Python is not addressed until the final chapter, which discusses later English satires inspired by the 1950s artists previously mentioned. Most of the focus in this chapter is directed at *Beyond the Fringe* and the mid-60s films by the Beatles, but it gives the reader a sense of the cultural and political climate that Monty Python entered into. It also explains how Python was directly influenced by its predecessors. "Like its precursors, Python was also so clearly modeled after the Goons that even the Pythons themselves admit near-plagiarism" (Rowlings 2004, 187). Also, the author examines how the BBC was widely against *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, and did what they could to try and censor it. An example is given regarding the "Proust" sketch and how the BBC tried to eliminate the word "masturbation" from it. Finally, the author mentions how Monty Python, because of its frequent re-broadcasts, is commonly referenced in other shows, movies and stand-up routines. Though this work is not centered on Python, it gives the reader an extensive background in the genre of British satire that they were a part of.

<u>*Non-print sources:*</u>

DVDs and Videos:

There is a plethora of Monty Python video recordings available, and not all of them give background information about the group itself. I have only included videos and DVDs that are relevant to those who want to find out more about Monty Python and the solo projects that each group member ventured on. If one wants to consult a complete list of Monty Python's videos and DVDs, one can look at the back of Kim "Howard" Johnson's <u>The First 28 Years of Monty Python.</u>

Hughes, Terry, and Ian MacNaughton. *Monty Python Live at the Hollywood Bowl.*
        Handmade Films and Columbia Pictures, 1982.

Produced by George Harrison, this video shows Monty Python performing live versions of some of their famous sketches from *Flying Circus*. The way the crowd reacts to them is interesting to see; they seem to know all the lines by heart. One can also see the Pythons laughing at themselves as certain aspects of the show don't go exactly as planned. The performance was an opportunity for Monty Python to make some extra money while they were trying to formulate a central concept for the sketches they had written for *Meaning of Life*. This source demonstrates the extent of Python's cult following here in the States and also shows candid footage of the Pythons unseen anywhere else.

MacNaughton, Ian *Monty Python's Parrot Sketch Not Included*. Paramount Home Video,
        1990.

This video, introduced by comedian Steve Martin, presents sketches from *Monty Python's Flying Circus* that were never before seen in the United States, as well as those that have been classic favorites. At the end of the special, Martin pulls open a cabinet in which all six members of Monty Python are hiding. This was the final appearance of all six Pythons together, filmed right before Graham Chapman's death. This source is noteworthy not only because it is the last time the Pythons were together on video, but also because it contains rare sketches that are hard to come by.

Robinson, Peter (director) and John Cleese (writer). *Meetings, Bloody Meetings.* Video
        Arts Ltd., 1994.

For those interested in John Cleese's ventures after Monty Python, they can view this video, which is part of a series designed to help mangers make workplace meetings more productive. Cleese stars as an inefficient chairperson who dreams that he is being put on trial for conducting business meetings in an ill-advised manner. After reviewing Cleese's

last few conferences, the court pronounces him guilty on all five counts: failing to prepare himself, failing to inform others, failing to plan the agenda, failing to control the discussion and failing to record the decisions. The judge then demonstrates that the discipline and logic needed to conduct a court case parallel those needed to run an effective business meeting. A supplementary discussion guide is also provided to help businessmen and other users get the most out of the video. It includes key points and discussion topics designed to help people reflect on the tenets presented. This source has been used in both principles of management classes and in corporations to improve their meeting agendas. In so doing, it demonstrates Cleese's ability to branch out of Monty Python fame and use humor and insight to benefit others.

Biziou, Peter and Terry Jones (directors). *Monty Python's Life of Brian: Criterion Collection.* Criterion, 1999.

This DVD not only includes the full-motion picture of *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, but also some special features that give a lot of background the film, as well as Monty Python as a whole. Included is a 50-minute BBC documentary that originally aired in 1979, celebrating Python's 10-year anniversary, filmed on the set of *Life of Brian*. Here, the Pythons talk about one another and the origins of the group. Other special features are audio commentary from the five living Pythons, and five deleted scenes, also with commentary.

Gilliam, Terry (director). *Brazil: Criterion Collection.* Criterion, 1999.

The full-length film *Brazil* is the main feature of this DVD. Other special features include audio commentary by Gilliam and an interview with his co-writer, Tom Stoppard. The documentary entitled *The Battle of Brazil: A Video History* relates the famous battle between Gilliam and Universal regarding the movie's release in the United States. "The Production Notebook" also provides the three drafts of the script, as well as storyboards and shots that never made it to the screen. Thus, this is a great source for those who want to know more about the movie *Brazil* and its behind-the-scenes struggles.

Shephard, Elaine (director). *It's…the Monty Python Story*. A&E Home Video, 1999.

Hosted by comedian Eddie Izzard, a string of various Python interviews intertwined with comments by other comedians tell about the history of Monty Python. Cleese, Palin and Jones talk about the "The Meaning of Life," and state that is not quite as good as their other films. Palin and Gilliam explain why they are opposed to the idea of a formal reunion. The video includes footage of Palin re-visiting some of the places where the Pythons filmed some of their sketches. It also has rare clips, as well as the seldom seen German episodes of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. This DVD is part of a larger set entitled *Life of Python*.

Gilliam, Terry and Terry Jones (directors). *Monty Python and the Holy Grail, Special Edition*. Columbia Tristar Home Entertainment, 2001.

What makes this DVD unique is that it contains a lot of special features that other versions of the movie do not. One can look at old programs, artifacts, posters, preliminary drawings, and an on-screen screenplay. It also contains two documentaries. The first was filmed on the set of the movie, and was originally broadcast on December 19, 1974. All six Pythons are interviewed by a representative from *BBC Film Night*. Gilliam and Jones provide information regarding the direction of the film and the difficulties they had with it. Cleese and Palin talk about what it was like to film the movie, and state that their only qualm with Jones and Gilliam is that some of the jokes were sacrificed for visual aesthetics. Idle adds a bit of comedy by taking the interviewer's questions and reading them himself, correcting the grammar where necessary. The second documentary shows Jones and Palin, 25 years after the fact, revisiting the locations were scenes of the film were shot. Footage from the film is intertwined with the dialogue so that the viewer can understand all the references that Jones and Palin make to various scenes. Both Pythons also provide some useful background information regarding the film. For instance, Jones tells about how he and Gilliam chose a bunch of castles in Scotland to film the movie, only to receive a letter from the Department of the Environment for Scotland stating that Monty Python could not use any of their castles because they might do "things that were inconsistent with the dignity of the fabric of the building." Regarding the actual film itself, audio commentary from all six Pythons is supplemented with the movie's dialogue. The trailer for the movie, and a link to www.pythononline.com are also included.

Gilliam, Terry and Terry Jones (directors). *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life (Special Edition).* MCA Home Video, 2003.

This new special edition of *The Meaning of Life* includes deleted scenes from the movie, and audio commentary from the five living Pythons. It also has a documentary entitled "The Meaning of Making 'The Meaning of Life'" in which each Python is interviewed, and archival video material with Graham Chapman is included. The Pythons mention how it was difficult for them to find a central theme to link all the sketches within the movie together, and how they finally ended up with the meaning of life concept to connect them. Though the special features contain a lot of silly material as well, one can find the information provided in the commentaries and documentary quite informative.

Davidson, John-Paul and Roger Mills (directors). *Himalaya*. BBC Warner, 2005

This documentary hosted by Michael Palin traces his journey across the mountains of Asia. This is the fifth travel documentary that Palin hosted for the BBC. He visits the cultures of Pakistan, India, and Kashmir. He encounters both extreme wealth and dire poverty, as well as freezing cold altitudes. This DVD demonstrates how Palin has been able to transcend Python comedy and experience new cultures and people.

Audio Recordings:

Audio recordings associated with Monty Python are extensive, and include their live performances, film soundtracks, songs, and sketches from <u>Flying Circus</u>. Some of them include solo projects, such as Idle's <u>Spamalot</u>, and numerous books on tape. Thus, I have only included those most relevant to those who want to find out more about Monty Python. Anyone who wants to consult a complete discography can look at the back of <u>The First 28 Years of Monty Python</u>.

Chapman, Graham, et. al. *Monty Python Live! At City Center*. Arista Records, 1976.

This album has a veritable "hit" list of the most memorable skits from Monty Python`s Flying Circus. What makes it particularly noteworthy is a diary account from Michael Palin that is reprinted on the back. It tells of the group's visit to America in March of 1975 to promote the release of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*.

Cleese, John. *John Cleese at the Beeb*. BBC Audiobooks America, 1999.

This source includes commentaries and introductions by John Cleese and rare excerpts of his sketches from *That Was the Week that Was, The Frost Report, At Last The 1948 Show*. It also has audio clips from *Fawlty Towers* and his book *Families and How to Survive Them*. This is a great source for those who want to know more about John Cleese.

Idle, Eric and John Du Prez (composer). *Monty Python's SpamAlot*. Decca Broadway: A
      Universal Music Company, 2005.

This is the soundtrack to *Monty Python's SpamAlot,* a Broadway rendition of *Monty Python's Search for the Holy Grail*. The show was written by Eric Idle, who came up with the idea after thinking about how certain lines from *Holy Grail* could easily be turned into songs. CD jacket tells how he joined forces with John Du Prez to write them. It also talks about copies of the songs were sent to all the other Python members, who reacted favorably to it. The lyrics of the songs are also included.

Websites:

The Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com)

This site has information on 130,000 films, including those of Monty Python. Each film has a plot summary, awards listings, rating, box office grosses, alternative titles, and links to other websites. The site also provides biographical sketches of prominent actors and actresses; all six members of Python have a listing. It is perfect for those who want to

find out more about the Monty Python members themselves and the films that they were a part of. Documentary listings and cross-references are also included.

Pythonline (www.pythonline.com)

This website was begun about 10 years ago by Eric Idle and the other Pythons as a way of communicating with their fans. It has an introduction by both Idle and Kim "Howard" Johnson, author of many Python monographs. The best feature this site has is the online newsletter called *The Daily Llama*. Here, Monty Python fans can keep up with all the goings-on of the various members of Monty Python. The newsletter is archived back to the website's origin, which makes *The Daily Llama* a viable information resource. It also includes a "Pythonology," listing significant Monty Python events dating back to the 1960s. Each entry contains sources that the site consulted when researching its information. This website is a rarity in that it provides accurate and non-biased information about Monty Python.

Monty Python's SpamAlot (www.montypythonsspamalot.com)

This site provides background on the musical *SpamALot*, which won a Tony Award for Best Musical this year. The site includes "The Tale of SpamAlot from the Beginning," a long written entry by Eric Idle explaining the origins behind the musical, and the obstacles he faced before it was released. The site also provides a brief biographical sketch of Idle, composer John Du Prez, director Mike Nichols, and actors David Hyde Pierce, Tim Curry, and Hank Azaria (as of December 2005). Though it does contain some silly elements, it does provide useful information as well.