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Encyclopedias

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Encyclopedias

Ripe with information, we once were
the center of everyone's living rooms,
proudly shelved to show the world

how smart each family was,
so many volumes spanning
countries, worlds, universes.

Every mother thought us necessary—
bought us on the installment plan,
book by book as a supermarket

promotion. We had our glory years
of solving family arguments
over state capitals and Miss

America winners. Now we're
Dwellers, library castoffs, Goodwill
and Salvation Army inmates

or left in basements to mold and rot,
no one caring if floods leach ink
from our pages. No longer do sons

and daughters pour over us,
thinking us book-report worthy.
Our city data and populations

charts are out-of-date, we concede,
but our color photos still vibrate
with all the spectrum's hues—

pages of planets, moons, galaxies.
Won't you save us? When you moan
there's no room in your house

for us, you're saying there's no
room in your life for knowledge.
Keep your ignorance. Someone,

Somewhere, will love us, want to stroke
our pages, skimming, reading us. We know
so much more than any of you can remember.