A primary reference has been identified by the author team as a "key" reference, which is critically important to understanding a given subject. Each article of the SEBoK defines a set of 10 or fewer primary references. The general concept for primary references is that if a SEBoK user were to read both the article on a subject along with the defined Primary References, he or she would have a firm grasp on the principle concepts relate to that subject.

Each primary reference article contains the complete bibliographic information for that reference and a listing of all of the articles that list that source as a primary reference. Where possible, authors have provided an annotation, explaining how that reference specifically addresses a specific knowledge area or topic of the SEBoK. To provide feedback on a primary reference, please use the DISQUS feature for that primary reference.

Note: The reference list is sorted alphabetically by title; "a", "an", and "the" are included in the alphabetization (i.e. "A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK)" would be listed under "A").