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My Own Private Library: A Peek Inside the Personal Library of a Librarian

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My Own PRIVATE LIBRARY

By Chris Sharpe

My private library is a nostalgic collection of interests scattered among three places: my office, my home, and my parents' home. Although I rarely re-read my books, I have an emotional attachment to them, and I resist letting them go. Now, I buy fewer books due to financial and space considerations. Most of my new items are those that were not available through the library or were given to me as gifts.

In this age of streaming content I have been reflecting on what I want to own. I enjoy content through subscribed or free services, but I rarely think of buying them for a collection. Purchasing digital files of films, music, or books does not have the same satisfying feeling for me as owning the physical items. E-books are convenient for looking up information or reading a chapter, but I dislike reading a whole book on a device.

Once, I had the desire to have my own home library room with shelves full of books. I remember touring homes with libraries and thinking that these rooms were a symbol of success and intelligence. Would having a room full of books inspire me to write more? I imagined retreating to my library to work on some grand project, pulling a book from the shelf when I needed to confirm something. That sounds old fashioned now, and my desire to have a dedicated room of books has faded. I

wonder what I will still own in print after ten or more years. For now, here is my private library:

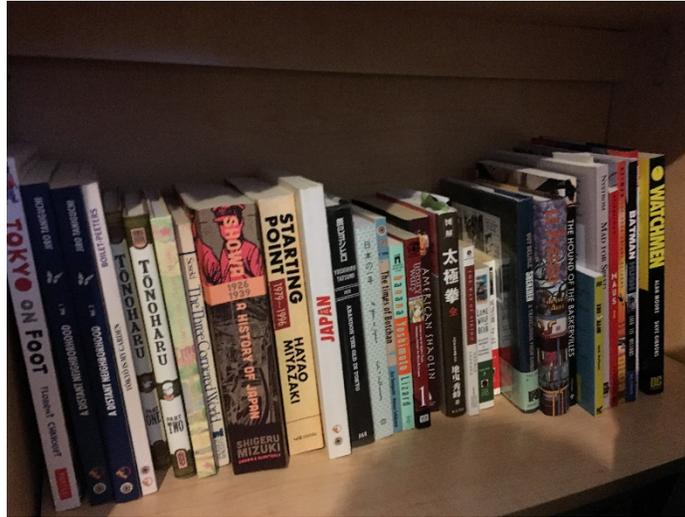
In my office I have books I mostly read during my undergraduate and graduate studies. There is my history section on Mexico, Latin America, and South America I used while working on my BA in history. Above that section is a small collection of public administration texts from my master's program. Jeff Speck's *Walkable City* is a favorite book as I researched the issue of walkability in my capstone project. Of course, I can't forget my library science



books; they are on the next shelf over. It's doubtful that I will ever read or refer to most of these books again, but I like seeing them on my shelves. They remind me of what I was focusing on during my studies, and I look at them with a sense of accomplishment. Someday, I will decide that it is time to let them go, but I just cannot do it yet.

Another shelf has part of my collection related to Japan. After finishing my undergraduate degree, I lived in Japan for three years working as an assistant language teacher at a junior high school. I resisted the urge to ship too many of the books I bought in Japan back to Georgia, but I did keep a few and left the rest behind for my successor. Again, I doubt that I will read them again, but they express my interest in Japan.

Another holds the rest of my books related to Japan. These are mainly graphic novels ranging from fiction to history to travelogues. Although I did not read manga while in Japan, I got the urge to start reading comics or graphic novels when I returned to the US. They include Forent Chavouet's *Tokyo on Foot*, a pictorial travelogue through the city; Lars Martinson's *Tonoharu*, a graphic novel about life as an assistant language teacher; and Shigeru Mizuki's *Showa*, the first part of his tour through Japanese history. I have them not only because I am interested in Japan and admire the artistry, but also because they take me back to my life in Japan where I had great adventures and made great friends.



Speaking of going back, there is my last small private library still at my parents' house. It is all boxed up in their basement because I don't really have room at my own house. Why are they still there and not in a library book sale? That nostalgic factor is powerful and prevents me from just giving them up. The books are

mostly from my middle school and high schools days: fantasy series like *Dragonlance* and *Forgotten Realms*; biographies of Buster Keaton, Buddy Holly, and James Dean; and even humor books from Lewis Grizzard. They are just collecting dust in that box, and I should really pass them on. Yet, I still enjoy looking at them when I visit my parents and recall my younger school days.

So I read mostly library books and buy only graphic novels. I have a focus on what I want to collect now. I may be sentimental about the books from my past, but I am always looking forward to the next book to read. When I do say goodbye to most of my private library it will be a bit sad. I think I will be okay because the curiosity that led me to being a librarian also drives me to seek out and read new stories.

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