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My Own PRIVATE LIBRARY

A peek inside the personal library of a librarian

by Chris Carroll

My library... is like a river. It is a constantly moving entity. It has a life of its own.

Years from now, I will still have a library, but there will be subtle changes. The size may be different, and there may be new genres and subgenres flowing into it. When a money drought comes along, fewer books flow into it; when times are good, my bookcases overflow their banks and flood into other rooms in my house. And before I wear out the simile, let me just say that my personal library is not static. It grows, and my family and I grow with it.

My father was a constant reader, and when I was young — and because our house was relatively small — all of our books were kept on a long, two-shelf bookcase in my bedroom. Seeing my father read and being in such close proximity to all those books are what made me a passionate reader. My personal library started with the works of Jules Verne and H.G. Wells, but in the mid-1970s, two books shaped my mind (or warped it, as some would say). The first two adult novels I ever bought with my own money were *Carrie* by Stephen King and *Jaws* by Peter Benchley. After that, I read every scary book I could get my hands on, and my library today is a reflection of that love of the horror story.

Along with almost everyone else, I read Stephen King's works. In junior high school, I remember taking a copy of arguably one of the best horror short-story collections published, *Dark Forces*, to school and reading it instead of

my texts. That work got me hooked on short stories, and I continue to collect them today. In my home, you will find *Dark Descent*, *999*, *Prime Evil*, *Modern Masters of Horror* and others from varied authors, as well as collections by individual authors such as Stephen King, Robert McCammon, H.P. Lovecraft, Dan Simmons and Clive Barker.

My library does have other genres as well. In the last couple of years, I've been collecting crime noir books by Ken Bruen, Charlie Huston, Dennis Lehane and others. And I will read pretty much anything, but I tend to stick with fiction. I will take anything by George Pelecanos, Cormac McCarthy, Jeff Long, Karin Slaughter, Lee Child, Douglas Preston, Lincoln Child. However, those works always act like a wine cracker for me, just enough to cleanse my mental palate so I can try something new in horror.

My library grows now with children's books, with my daughter's Harry Potter books and my son's Magic Tree House collection. And I have started adding signed works as well. I prefer to contact the authors by e-mail and ask them to personalize them to me, for sentimental reasons and to reassure them that they are not wasting their time signing something that will wind up on eBay.

So, my river of books overflows at times and fills other rooms in my house, but I see that love of reading being passed on to my kids, and I cannot help but feel a little proud of that. ►►

