

October 2010

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

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### Recommended Citation

Odom, Karen (2010) "My Own Private Library: A Peek into the Personal Library of a Librarian," *Georgia Library Quarterly*: Vol. 47 : Iss. 4 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq/vol47/iss4/2>

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## My Own PRIVATE LIBRARY

### A peek inside the personal library of a librarian

by Karen Odom

My own private library consists of three large built-in bookcases, two of which are located in my kitchen. Needless to say, the bulk of my library is cookbooks. My love of cooking began many years ago when I was a child, standing at my grandmother's kitchen counter helping her beat eggs, sift flour and wash the fresh vegetables from my grandfather's garden. At this point in my life, my grandmother was the cookbook — all of the recipes were shelved in her head, not in an indexed text held together by elaborate binding.

Since she spurred my love of cooking, baking and all things food-related, it was only natural that I would start collecting cookbooks as a teenager. What began as a small collection of family recipes printed on index cards and held in old photo albums turned into a large collection of books that spans everything from entertaining, etiquette, baking, regional cookery — everything an epicurean could want and more.

My ultimate favorite and go-to book is the classic *The Joy of Cooking*. My grandmother has a copy given to her as a wedding gift back in 1950, gave my mother her copy as a wedding gift in the 1970s, and gave me my copy as a Christmas gift when I moved out on my own. Carrying on the tradition, it is now the gift I usually give as a wedding or shower gift. It has the best recipe for chocolate chip drop cookies I've ever made (sorry, Martha Stewart)!

Like any good girl living in Georgia, I have my copies of all of Paula Deen's cookbooks, *The Blue Willow Inn*

*Cookbook* by Jane and Michael Stern and a copy of *The Pirates' House Cookbook* that has the infamous Pirate Punch recipe that is simply delicious. Being a native Floridian, I would be remiss if I did not mention *The Columbia Restaurant Spanish Cookbook* compiled by Adela Hernandez Gonzmart. With locations in seven Florida cities, this restaurant has some of the best authentic Spanish food I have eaten.



I also have a nice collection of cookbooks from various Junior League chapters from all over the country. My favorite chicken salad recipe came from the Tallahassee chapter's Junior League cookbook, *Thymes Remembered*. It's the perfect book for entertaining when hosting Bunko on a Thursday night.

Cookbooks are more than just pages of recipes bound together to look pretty on a shelf. It reminds me of the time and place where I purchased the book or was given the book as a gift. It reminds me of the times I spent as a child at my grandmother's house, pushing a kitchen chair up to the counter to help cook supper or make the cornbread. It reminds me of the smells wafting through the house on chilly fall mornings, waiting for breakfast to be ready. Each cookbook that is housed in its place on my shelf in the kitchen holds a memory for me. And one day I hope to pass on those memories to another generation to enjoy as I did. ►►

Karen Odom is branch manager of the Houston County Public Library's Nola Brantley Memorial Library in Warner Robins.