

10-1-2012

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Recommended Citation

Blocker, LouAnn (2012) "My Own Private Library: A Peek Inside the Personal Library of a Librarian," *Georgia Library Quarterly*: Vol. 49 : Iss. 4 , Article 5.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq/vol49/iss4/5>

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My Own PRIVATE LIBRARY

By LouAnn Blocker

Several books have remained in my library collection since childhood. I have a Bible my parents gave me in 1968, whose boards illustrate the Scripture verse “suffer the little children to come unto me.” Other gifts from my parents are a pocket copy of Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* that they purchased at Stratford-upon-Avon, and a beautifully illustrated *Best of James Herriot*. A book that was on my parents’ shelves for as long as I can remember, *One Hundred and One Famous Poems*, includes “The Deacon’s Masterpiece” and the “June” excerpt from “The Vision of Sir Launfal.” I was the child who was lucky enough to inherit this little gem, and I plan to keep it!

I collected novels for a long time, both in paperback and hardback; now I’m more willing to let them come and go, giving away a good novel or trading it at the used bookstore. I borrow more from the library and buy fewer books nowadays. I still keep copies of all six of Jane Austen’s major novels, her letters, juvenilia, unfinished works—yes, I own a copy of every word she was ever known to write!—and I reread the ‘big six’ frequently. A sampling of other novels currently on my shelves for rereads or occasional perusal are *Good Omens: the Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch*; *Ivanhoe*; *Treasure Island*, all seven of the Harry Potter series, and Jan Karon’s Father Tim books.

I also own a good number of cookbooks. Many were gifts from family members during my vegetarian days and include two beautiful English vegetarian cookbooks by Rose Elliot. Did you know that many English cookbooks use weight for some measures that we use volume measurements for? I have an ancient copy of

The Moosewood Cookbook, whose covers are missing and which has telltale stains in the appropriate places—red on the tomato sauce page; green on the falafel page. I had this book when I first left home; it’s seen more use than all the others combined, because I used it to learn how to cook.

I’ve had an interest in self-help, spirituality, and yoga for some years, and books that reflect those interests are scattered about, with some odd results. *The Imitation of Christ* and *The Art of Extreme Self-Care* are unlikely bedfellows, but there you have it. I have bought and given away several copies of *The Dance of Anger* and don’t currently own one, but I plan to replace it soon.

One of my current interests is information overload. These books, along with some other library science titles, are on the shelves in my office at work. Some of my favorites in this area are *The Shallows*; *Distracted*; and *The Overflowing Brain*. A title I picked up thinking it was about information overload, but which is really a bigger look at the internet and society, is *Interface Culture*. Though it was published in 1999, it remains relevant.

I share my shelves with my husband—we don’t keep separate collections as some people do. He loves atlases, popular works on the history of technology, and science fiction and fantasy. I highly recommend *Cathedral, Forge, and Water-Wheel*, a book about technology in the Middle Ages that I learned about from him.

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