

4-1-2014

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

Lindsay Blake
Georgia Regents University, lblake@gru.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq>

 Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Blake, Lindsay (2014) "My Own Private Library: A Peek Inside the Personal Library of a Librarian," *Georgia Library Quarterly*: Vol. 51 : Iss. 2 , Article 8.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq/vol51/iss2/8>

This Columns is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Georgia Library Quarterly by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@kennesaw.edu.

My Own PRIVATE LIBRARY

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

By Lindsay Blake

As terrible as it is, I judge books by their covers. I do take some time to read the description to further determine if this is something I really want to read, but my favorite pastime is wandering bookstores and looking at books. I don't care if it's Barnes & Noble or an independent shop, I

am not snooty (except the warehouse ones, can't stand those).

When you are browsing the shelves you need something to grab your attention. A catchy title or, for me, a cover which rouses my interest and beckons me to take a better look, is a book I will be picking up.

Judging books by their covers is not all bad. Due to this predilection, I own a variety of books. Judging covers also allows me to choose or avoid certain genres, since covers can be typecast. A swooning woman with a half-naked man is certainly a tip-off as to the contents. So my bookshelves feature theoretical physics, classic literature, young adult, fantasy, science fiction, mystery, spy novels, military history, adventure, and a lot more just shelved under fiction. You will find no romances though, only because I recycle those to others in need.

My path to books has been diverse. It began with my parents who own and publish seven local papers in Northwestern Kansas. Once a year we would all pack up for the annual Colorado Press Association Conference in

Denver, Colorado. There were two things we always did while in Denver. First, we would be dragged to the Art Museum. Second, we would head to the Tattered Cover. The Tattered Cover is a local independent bookstore located in Lower Denver, and there are actually three of

them there now. I cannot be sure how much my parents spent in that store over the years, but they never said no when it came to books. So we three children would roam freely for a few hours through the store and return with piles of books. Those books are all still with my parents in a personal

library that covers three walls of their basement and would definitely merit a separate write-up. Those piles of books also include my mother's numerous mass market paperback historical-with-religious-figure-protagonist murder mysteries and my father's glossy, dust-jacketed train books. My father usually spent more than the rest of us combined on those train books.

Fast forward to my library today. It is a combination of classic literature, new authors, spy novels, and history all contained on beautiful built-in shelving. This was not always the case. Our collection started the first five years of its life on my makeshift shelves in our first house. Then last year we moved into a new house, and I love it. The living room features a large fireplace, flanked on either side by floor to



ceiling bookcases. These bookcases are currently overflowing with books my husband and I apparently cannot do without. I think we have three shelves alone of Clive Cussler. My husband loves Clive Cussler and really all war/spy/adventure novels. After my attempt to clean all old books off our shelves, he defiantly reread all his Cussler novels to keep them from the discard pile. I relented, but they were assigned to the bottom shelves with all the other mass market paperbacks.

On the left shelves you'll see our non-fiction section. Primarily, this section is filled with history, and of those histories, primarily war stories. These are not mine. I have contributed a few titles from theoretical physics and astronomy—Brian Greene, Carl Sagan and Stephen Hawking—but for the most part I am a fiction gal. My husband, however, will read most any non-fiction book if it has to do with military history topics. Current American conflicts and historical military figures dominate. He will also read most sports non-fiction and throws in an occasional cooking, gambling, or travel/adventure item. Below the non-fiction we have the miles of spy/adventure paperbacks.

My books can be found on the right side of the fireplace. At the top we start with classic literature. Here I have John Steinbeck, from the well-known *Of Mice and Men* to the less well-known *The Pastures of Heaven*. Willa Cather follows with *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. Somehow Willa's novels always make me feel at home, which may be due in part to their being set in the plains. F. Scott Fitzgerald is next, though I admit that I am not as interested in the details of the Jazz Age as I am in the working men in Steinbeck novels. Rounding out the shelf we have Ernest Hemingway with a concise history of love in world wars and bullfighting. I will admit that these books are from a particular reading phase. I was into classic American literature, and a number of these books were copies my parents had read at some point.

From here we move into my college Intro to Fiction class. It was here I was introduced to Salman Rushdie, Paul Auster, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky. The next many years of my life would be taken up with reading *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Crime and Punishment*, *City of Glass*, *The Invention of Solitude*, *The Satanic Verses*, *Midnight's Children*, etc. One thing I can say for all of these authors: they are not easy to read. Dostoyevsky with his incredible detail and ten million characters to keep track of; Rushdie with references to every possible area of art and culture imaginable; and Auster where people manage to disappear little by little. They are all fascinating authors and each for very different reasons. Next to these are the authors I have come to really love not for the message they convey, but for the sheer joy of reading their work. Carlos Ruiz Zafón, Neal Stephenson, Neil Gaiman, Elizabeth Peters, Connie Willis, Terry Pratchett, and Walter Moers all filling numerous shelves and read and reread. These authors are all fun and enjoyable in completely different ways, but when I read them they all make me feel like I am curled up in a comfy spot in the sun with my favorite book on a lazy Saturday afternoon.

The bottom two shelves are devoted to children's books. This section is a newer addition to the shelves, but as our daughter has grown (she is now four), my husband and I have found we have the same weakness when it comes to books for her as our parents had. She already has a shelf of children's books downstairs as well as a cache for bedtime reading in her room. In addition to the children's books we have young adult fiction. Things like *Harry Potter*, *The Golden Compass*, *Eragon*, and yes, even *Twilight*. All series I have read and collected in hardback versions (covers intact!) with the plan of reading them to my children someday.

Lindsay Blake is Clinical Information Librarian at Georgia Regents University