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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

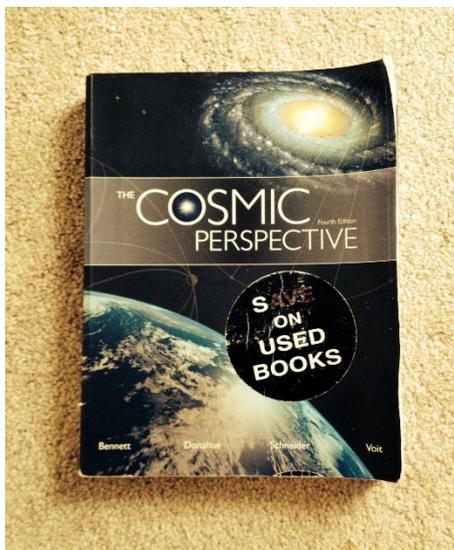
By Amy Burger

Everyone knows that librarians love books; they buy them all the time and fill their houses with them until they're returning their personal books to the library and re-shelving the library's books at home, until the line between work and home is forever blurred, and eventually they move into the library and commute to their former homes, where they lend out their books to patrons who have started coming there, because that's where the books are now.

Haha, no. But if you're a librarian, it feels like you must love books (which I do), and so you own a lot of them (which I don't). I *have* books, but usually I didn't buy them; most were gifts or college textbooks it wouldn't have paid to sell back (anyone looking for a 10-year-old astronomy textbook, hit me up). When it comes to buying books, I'd rather spend my money elsewhere. Why would I buy books when I can get them for free? My books come from the library, and they always have. So when I think of my own private library, it's not part of my home; it's a lot of libraries in a lot of different places.

My first library, the Shasta County Public Library in Redding, California, was in a massive, musty concrete building that hosted my first summer reading program (it was here that I obtained a t-

shirt declaring "I read, therefore I am." My younger brother's shirt advised, "Escape the norm and read!"). In 1992, the library was threatened by budget cuts, so in protest my brother and I attended a rally on the lawn of the county courthouse, where we wore oversized white t-shirts we'd decorated ourselves with markers. This library, according to Google Maps, is now a parking deck (the present library having been relocated to a newer, sleeker facility in more prosperous times).



After moving to Naalehu, Hawaii, in 1992 (...was the move a grand gesture of protest at the lack of support for libraries in Shasta County? It seems unlikely, but I'll ask my mom), we found our public library in a repurposed gas station, a concrete block building like its Redding predecessor, but comparatively dinky. Later, its contents were relocated to a singlewide wooden trailer and enhanced by a lone computer with—a novelty!—the Internet.



Oh, I had libraries at school as well; back in Redding, the school library was the domain of David's mom,

Mrs. Powers, who handed each of us a numbered wooden dipstick we could use to keep track of exactly where each book we'd removed belonged on its shelf. At Naalehu

Elementary, the library was in the school basement, behind double doors painted a shiny red. After we moved to Georgia, post-Y2K, our school library was a state-of-the-art facility in which computers took up more room than books, and also they called it a media center.

Another move also meant another public library, the Forsyth County Public Library in Cumming, Georgia, which was bigger and nicer than its predecessor, with the added benefit of lots more computers (this was probably also because the 90s were over, but honestly, I wouldn't be surprised to go back to my old

library, which is still in that trailer, and find just one computer, even now).

These days, my library is also my place of work. It's the books I see every weekday and check out anytime I want. I hesitated when considering this column. I don't own any books. I don't really have my own private library. What will I say? I get my books on loan! So here's the truth: my library is nowhere in particular. But in a way, that means it's also anywhere.

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