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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

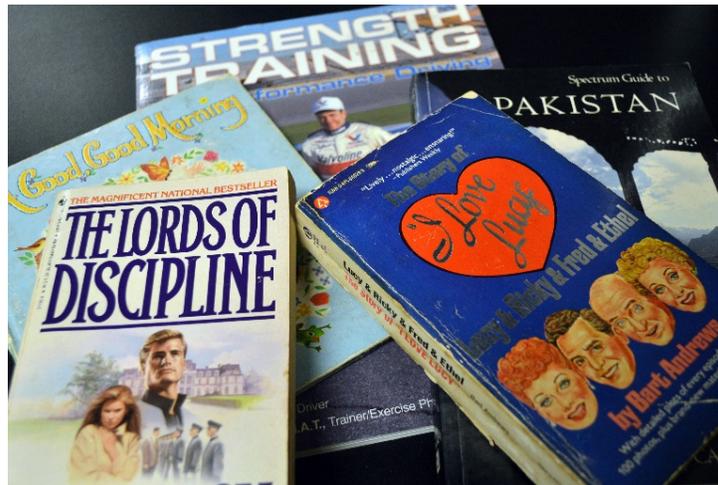
By Joy Bolt

When asked to write this column I readily volunteered and then thought, “Uh-oh, what am I going to write about?” You see, I do not own a lot of books. I know this is sacrilege to many in library land, but it is true. With some dread I ventured to my bookshelves to seek inspiration. As I looked through them I realized that my collection told the story of my life, and I realized that so many of my past reading experiences could be summed up as, “It’s just a phase.”

## Phase 1

*“Soft Kitty, gray Kitty, I’m glad you are my Kitty.”*  
(Rutherford, Bonnie and Bill Rutherford. *A Good, Good Morning*, 1963, 8)

Some of my favorite childhood books are still on my bookshelves. Most have a checkout card in the back. Not a real card mind you, but one that I made out of scrap paper because, yes, I played library as a child. I made book pockets and cards, wrote in accession numbers, and stamped them with the date stamp my mother had purchased for me (how I knew about accession numbers at that age is beyond me). One reason I played library was because I loved going to the local library every week. Not only did I love the library, I loved the librarian too. I decided at a very young age that when I grew up I wanted to be just like our local library branch manager, Myrl Hansard. She was tall, elegant, graceful, blond, and a librarian.



Well, I grew up, and, for those that have met me, you know I only managed one out of five.

## Phase 2

*“I love Lucy and she loves me. We’re as happy as two can be. Sometimes we quarrel but then how we love making up again.”* (Andrews, Bart. *The Story of I Love Lucy*, 1976, 127)

Did you know that the opening theme of *I Love Lucy* has lyrics? By the time I reached high school I was really into chorus and drama and loved reading biographies and stories of Hollywood and Broadway. My favorite actress of all time was Lucille Ball, and I was a

huge fan of *I Love Lucy* and still own several books on Ball and the show. But high school wasn’t all about the glamour of the screen and stage that I experienced through books, I was also a very active member of the Georgia Association for Media Assistants (GAMA) and was a student assistant in the media center. These two things enabled me to combine my theatrical interest with a new technology—videotape! Ms. Hansard (yes, she was now the high school media specialist) had received a grant to purchase state of the art video cameras. It wasn’t so much that I had talent but more to do with the fact that those first pieces of equipment were so big and cumbersome, I was too small to handle them. This left no

choice but to be on camera talent. And just to confirm my high school geekiness, I will mention that we entered a very early, if not the first, Georgia Student Media Festival (GSMF) with one of our creations.

### Phase 3

*"He shows people in their setting and in his double portrait of Arnolfini and his wife he lovingly records the details of their daily life..."* (Clark, Kenneth. *Civilisation: A Personal View*, 1969, 104)

It took me a while to figure out exactly what I wanted to do in college. I started out as an education major, then art education, and finally settling on studio art. And, as you know, I planned to be a librarian, so I really just needed that undergraduate degree to go on to grad school. Studio art, while enjoyable, was also very stressful with so many works to produce. The gallery where we displayed our work happened to be located in the library. Oh, and guess where I happened to work. Yes, the college library.

### Phase 4

*"On Sunday, I found the white gate on Stoll's Alley that led down a narrow brick path to the garden of Annie Kate's house on Church Street."* (Conroy, Pat. *The Lords of Discipline*, 1987, 101)

Just before I finished college, I decided to start working full-time while continuing my undergraduate degree. A fantastic opportunity came along to work at a law firm in downtown Atlanta as a library clerk. It was very interesting and, for the most part, rewarding. Because I

lived so far out in the suburbs I took public transportation every day. This led to me reading a great deal of fiction, which had not been my preference before. During this time I developed my love of John Irving and Pat Conroy and several of their books remain on my shelves today.

### Phase 5

*"Outside the museum, not far away, Zamzama, the eighteenth-century fireplace immortalized by Kipling as 'Kim's Gun'..."* (Williams, Susan and Jack Crowther, eds. *Spectrum Guide to Pakistan*, 1989, 269)

And then my path to graduate school and my career took a surprising turn. After graduating from college I spent three years in Pakistan. I attempted to learn Urdu and as much about the culture as I could. I also developed a love of South Asian fiction. I didn't work in a library during this time but would visit the British Council

Library in order to check out books. Here you could browse the open stacks (not all libraries in Pakistan had open stacks), and you were allowed three items at a time. You had an envelope that served as your library card and it contained three tickets. Each time you checked out an item they took one of your tickets to file as a record of your checkout.

### Phase 6

*"To maintain a high intensity of driving ability and to make positive split-second decisions, a healthy, strong body is required."* (Martin, Mark and John S. Comereski. *Strength Training for Performance Driving*, 1991, 6)



I returned to the States and working in law firm libraries and began my graduate studies (secretly hoping I would become tall, elegant, graceful, and blond). I worked my way up the chain, eventually becoming the library director for a major national law firm. The best thing about it was the money. The great salary allowed me to indulge in my passion for cars. I owned several during this time both showing and racing them. There is nothing quite like the thrill of pushing yourself and your car to the limit. And it is probably not something that one thinks of the average librarian as having for a hobby.



### Phase 7

*“The anguish, suffering and death experienced by Wiesel challenge the reader’s confidence in the existence of a loving God.” (Carder, Kenneth L. Living Our Beliefs: The United Methodist Way, 1996, 39)*

Remember how I mentioned the money at the law firm? Yeah, it was great but the job was not fulfilling on a personal level so I returned to academic libraries hoping to have a positive influence in the world. A favorite part has been seeing library assistants going on to library school and joining our ranks. Recently I started working on becoming a certified lay speaker in my church. To achieve this goal I have had to study and reflect on my beliefs and what I see in the world around me.

Writing this article has been a similar experience, I studied my bookshelves and reflected on my life and what my books have meant to me. My

private library is my story. Who knows what the next phase will be?

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