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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

My first thought about writing this was, gosh, I am going to look smart! My mind immediately raced to all my beloved collections of books I had lovingly and meticulously gathered through college and graduate school. Aside from collecting them from my classes, during those years I also worked at Borders bookstore. Going against my original intentions of attaining a job, I barely made any money from my work there because I would use/abuse employee-appreciation discount days to bring bags and bags of books home. My summers during those years were spent working, lounging at the neighborhood pool, and staying up very late at night reading my treasures. It was total heaven for a bookworm! My mind wanders back to the titles from those years—my collections of Shakespeare, the Bronte sisters (*Jane Eyre* is my all-time favorite book), voluminous Norton anthologies, books dealing with the history of science, and so forth.

But then I remembered that those books no longer live with me, as I looked around at my paltry collection of mostly non-academic titles. All of my impressive, “smart” titles are at my parents’ house—my mom jokingly refers to their home as my storage pod. Since being married a few years ago, we have lived in a two-room apartment, a rental house, and now our own home, but I have not had the space to move my books with me. They line the walls of three rooms at my parents: my library annex.



The books that I have around me now reflect the practical realities of life as I have known them; and I came to the conclusion when writing this article that I really only collect in a few genres. One of my largest collections is of cookbooks. If you want to give me a present, a safe bet is always a cookbook of some sort. I love paging through them, especially late at night. I find total relaxation imagining measurements of ingredients, the final product, and reading the occasional stories that accompany the creations. I have an absurd number of cookbooks, and I'd be thrilled to have an absurd number more. My favorites are Barefoot Contessa (impressive but easy), Nigella for her writing style, old church cookbooks (these have the best “oldies but goodies” recipes usually laden with cheese and condensed soups but crowd-pleasers

nonetheless), and anything Greek or Mediterranean. I also selectively collect some outrageously-difficult books, with *Demolition Desserts* as my most recent.

Ironically I realize another area I heavily collect in is nutrition and diets. I love reading the latest research on diets; it is like my celebrity tabloid news—reading the highs and lows of each diet; the rises and falls of ways of eating. The other day while in line at Ikea's cafeteria, my husband brought up the trendy Keto diet, and I proceeded to ramble off its benefits and pitfalls along with some anecdotal stories I had come across. His eyes glazed over after several

minutes, so I switched topics to the Swedish meatballs which were at hand. In terms of my library at home, I probably have 20 to 30 nutrition books—everything from the 5:2 diet to macros theories, Joel Fuhrman to South Beach. Yes, I have tried many of these diets! My current figure, being third trimester of pregnancy, reflects more of a human mushroom shape rather than that of a person with a cutting edge knowledge of health, but I hope my interest in nutrition returns in a practical way in a few months.

Besides my extreme interest in food, my other core areas I have collected in depict deeply personal areas I don't often talk about with others (being an introvert). If I am open about what is in my private library, I have an abounding collection of self-help books that reflect my transitioning life

experiences of my 20s and 30s—books on marriage and communication, books on mourning the loss of a child, titles of all sorts on motherhood, books on pregnancy (thanks to these I can tell you what sort of human fruit basket you are each week of pregnancy; week twenty you are carrying a baby the size of a banana, week thirty an eggplant!).

Additionally, I have other titles that reflect my professional transitions. I have worked since I was 16 years old in some capacity, so I experienced quite the life change when a couple of years ago, upon becoming a mother, I transitioned from a full-time, career-minded academic librarian to being a part-time contractor, primarily providing support for Voyager integrated library system and electronic resources. Though my roles in libraries have greatly diminished, I do credit

librarianship and exposure to forward-thinking library peers with spurring me into other exciting ventures. We have all probably heard of libraries with “maker spaces,” places where imagination and creativity can thrive thanks to free access to cutting edge technology and knowledgeable professionals (librarians and other technology-minded peers). I was always inspired by the idea of the maker-movement, so two years ago, thanks largely to my husband, we took the plunge and invested in some equipment and software to create our own

home-based “maker” business. We now offer laser cutting and 3D printing and prototyping services, and I shockingly am able to make at home, working part-time, what I made as a full-time librarian (my husband, always supportive and the best, said he was not shocked). My library, again, discloses this life change—I have



physical books and eBooks on starting a business, learning software programs, and inspirational books by small business owners. I've also utilized Lynda.com and other websites to learn the ropes of these new systems.

My last area that I collect in is definitely the most fun. I now have the joy of collecting children's books for my son and my coming daughter. We have been gifted with hand-me-downs, and I also frequent Goodwill and used bookstores.

As I survey my private library, what I can say is that my books reflect who I am—with all of my private sorrows, joys, and inadequacies. They reflect who I aspire to be—a gourmet chef, a fantastic all-knowing wife and mother, an astute businesswoman and librarian, and oh yeah—a fitness buff with meticulous eating

habits. Some of these goals, when I look at myself and all my shortcomings, seem like laughable aspirations, but in my private library I extend compassion to myself when reading these voices of authors and experts. These are my dreams, goals, and hopes. My private library is a space that gives me freedom to strive for a better version of myself.

I am blessed to have so many books at my fingertips. For those who do not have such resources at home, libraries are there to fill that void and provide unlimited opportunities, resources, and guidance through the labyrinth

of sources. Libraries continue to be amazing places because we offer users information that they can turn into knowledge and wisdom for their own personal and professional growth. We provide encouraging atmospheres and open borders of information to allow people to strive for their hoped-for best. Though I currently operate as a part-time library worker, sometimes feeling like I am on the fringes of librarianship, I am still a total librarian at heart and a proud member of our profession.

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