

7-1-2018

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

Linda Johnson

Riverdale High School, linda.n.johnson@clayton.k12.ga.us

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

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

Recommended Citation

Johnson, Linda (2018) "My Own Private Library: A Peek Inside the Personal Library of a Librarian," *Georgia Library Quarterly*: Vol. 55 : Iss. 3 , Article 9.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq/vol55/iss3/9>

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

Read? Who has time to read? This is a popular phrase I hear echoed by both students and staff alike. However, what they do not realize is that we literally read every day without thinking about it! Therefore, we can build a personal library from the items we do read and what we want to revisit. I am not too naïve to understand people are busy and time is tight, but who says personal libraries should be all print?

My personal library consists of both print and digital resources. My personal library also consists of temporary and permanent items. Surprised? You shouldn't be. While we are embracing the educational trend of personal learning environments (PLE), it is

possible to have personal libraries (PL) as well. Personal libraries (known as PL for the rest of this column) are where you gather information to enrich your life personally or professionally.

But I have digressed, so let me get back to discussing my PL. My PL is both traditional and nontraditional. It is traditional in the sense that I have physical copies of my favorite magazines, authors, and subjects. This encompasses about 20% of my collection. My PL is also nontraditional in that parts of it are digital content and even streaming content. No, these parts are not just PDF copies of books sitting on

an electronic device somewhere. They are mostly a collection of ebookmarks, articles, websites, and readings that are online or downloaded. Because my digital PL is online, they tend to be more temporary in nature as information gets updated, replaced, or deleted. Not surprisingly, 80% of my reading occurs here.

So why does the majority of my reading take place in the digital format? For me, it is

personal choice and convenience. The content is usually shorter, easier to digest, and meets an immediate or ongoing need. As an educator, a technologist, a media specialist, a webmaster, a librarian, and, most importantly, a mother, sister, and auntie, it is no wonder my time is spent on



readily available digital content. However, wading through the internet to find information that is accurate and reliable is another matter, and digital content should always be verified in this era of "fake news." Overall, my PL is a separated into three main categories: informational, inspirational, and entertainment.

First, most of my PL relates to items I retain for informational purposes. Granted, most of these items are technology-based because life is always evolving. I fight to keep up in my field through digital means. This includes streaming videos that could be for learning, reviewing tech

tips, or researching the latest gadgets. It could also be to check and view vendor websites, book reviews, or other selections of materials for education or teaching. The field of education changes often and technology changes even faster. Thus, online content can change rapidly, lasting temporarily from a few days to a few months. Informational reading comprises about 80% of my reading category.

Second, my PL items contain inspirational items to inspire me, which takes up 10% of my reading time. It could be a video clip from YouTube to a hard copy of the latest Joel Osteen book, or my favorite issue of Oprah magazine (yes, magazines still exist). Everyone needs to read something that encourages them. I read things that motivate me for my sanity, build my self-esteem, and help me keep focused on my purpose as well as my priorities. It is important to bounce back from burnout and the frailties of human life. We must find something positive to counteract these events to recharge our body, mind, and spirit. Without doing so, people may turn to more harmful vices. Plus, we all need to be inspired on occasion so we can inspire others. When we do so, we intend to live less stressful, more fulfilling lives—and may I dare say, be happier?!

Last, I read for entertainment, encompassing 10% of my reading leisure. We all need a healthy outlet for release. For some, this may take the form of addictive social media readings and postings. This is not me. However, I do read weekly blogs from multiple sites on my favorite soap recaps and spoilers. To me, this is no different than reading popular books that make their way to blockbuster theater screens. I still think the books always appear to be better than the movies. We need and crave entertainment as humans. The problem is, when we spend too much time being entertained beyond the regular stretch of vacations, we may end up

having an unbalanced life in relation to our reality.

However, reading for entertainment can be a great escape from reality on its own merit. As a youth, I read to escape my harsh reality of poverty and abuse. Some of my favorite stories were the Laura Ingalls Wilder series, any Choose Your Own Adventure series, anything Roman or Greek mythology, the Junie B. Jones series, and, of course—who could forget—anything Judy Blume. My readings from my young adult years included the Sweet Valley High series, *Makes Me Wanna Holla*, classic fiction of the 1970s–1990s, Hardy Boys, and Nancy Drew, as well as *Go Ask Alice*. As an adult, I have read many Terry McMillian, Mike Thaler, and Carmen Agra Deedy books along with *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, picture books, and books by various ministers from my inspirational collection. Now, I prefer joke books, cookbooks, and coming-of-age stories because they are less intense than the too-close-to-real-life books you find in most adolescent literature.

In closing, reading should be a pleasurable pastime. It should be an experience that leaves one wanting more. I encourage recreational reading in my school library and among my family members. The ability to read and to read well should not be taken for granted. It is a privilege we should hold dear when 50% of the adult population in the US cannot read beyond an eighth grade level:

[\(http://literacyprojectfoundation.org/community/statistics/\)](http://literacyprojectfoundation.org/community/statistics/).

Think you don't have to read? Think again. RIF was right all along. Reading **IS** fundamental.

Linda Johnson is Media Specialist at Riverdale High, Clayton County Public Schools