

7-1-2021

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

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Recommended Citation

German, G. N. (2021). My Own Private Library: A Peek Inside the Personal Library of a Librarian. *Georgia Library Quarterly*, 58(3). Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq/vol58/iss3/6>

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My Own PRIVATE LIBRARY

Less is more.

Hello, and welcome to my library. I am Nell, a youth services librarian living near Atlanta, Georgia.

I was not always a book lover. My love for reading developed when I finally realized that I didn't just have to read the books assigned by a teacher, but that there was a whole wide world of experiences for me to enjoy.

When I was first married, I worked less than a mile from the most amazing bookstore, called The Tattered Cover in Denver, Colorado. I

used to go to the store every day at lunch. My husband finally had to break the news to me that I needed to stop going, because I simply could not go in without buying at least one book, typically a children's book, for which we did not have the money.

Needless to say, I amassed quite an extensive collection of books. In our first purchased home I had a large entryway, filled with bookshelves, and filled with many books of all types. Some given to me, some textbooks, and many books that I enjoyed reading. The problem is, I simply don't read most books more than once. There are a select few, but generally, once I have read a book, I just don't want to revisit it. It's like going on the same vacation more than once—there are just so many new places to go, why repeat myself? However, I simply could not

bring myself to get rid of them. Even books that I didn't like the first time I read them; it was a book! They cannot be gotten rid of—can they? You would think, being a lifelong library user, that it would have occurred to me well before my 40s that I could simply borrow books, for free, that I didn't think I would read again.



My book collection, as it stands today, is much more selective. One catalyst was moving to a home that had significantly less space for bookshelves and books. The other was realizing how much money I was spending to read something just once.

I now have a sitting room with two and a half bookshelves. One bookshelf is books that my husband purchased. (Note I say purchased, and not read.) Although he loves many stories, reading is hard for him, so he tends to listen to books significantly more than he reads, but it hasn't stopped him from purchasing them. They include Chilton manuals for various cars that we no longer own (he was a mechanic for years, and is now an engineer), engineering textbooks that he might need someday, and books about Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War.

My bookshelf is a little more eclectic. Mostly they are books by some of my favorite authors. First and foremost is Nora Roberts and J. D. Robb. I finally purged a bunch of her books, not because I don't love her, but I just no longer had the space. I culled it down to a few favorites of Nora Roberts, and all of J. D. Robb's.

The In Death series is still the only series that I purchase every new book for, and I have re-read them each several times.

Also in my collection is the Harry Potter series. Like many people, I love Harry, but these books hold an even more special place in my heart. My son is now a young adult (also studying to be a librarian), but he

grew up in the throes of Harry Potter. I began reading the first book to him when he was probably in second or third grade, trying to convince him to attempt slightly more challenging books. I was reading the first book to him while my husband was sitting pretending to focus on something else. I

stopped for bedtime, telling my son to go take a bath. My husband looked up at me, crestfallen, and said "Wait! You can't stop now! What happens next?" Over the next six years, we read every book together as a family, patiently waiting the year or so in between release dates. I think my son was in junior high school when the last book came out, but we still sat together as a family reading them. We got them the day they were released, and the rule was, no one could read them the first time without the other two. The year my son left for camp on release day for book six was torture. I had to wait two weeks with the book staring at me from my dining room table!



Finally, there is the well-worn copy of *To Kill a Mockingbird* (the book that sent me to law school) and *Little Women* (I so wanted to be as talented as Jo). I also have a prized group of four books that have been passed down to my son from my father, who received them from his grandfather. There is a collection of Bibles and other religious studies materials that have

helped me define and guide my faith. I have all of the Sue Grafton alphabet series. I have many books by Sir Jeffrey Archer. And, as a youth services librarian, many great YA books by the likes of Shusterman and Yang. (I will never get rid of my personally autographed copy of *Scythe*!) Last but not least is a small

collection of children's books that I read to my son, and that I hope to someday read to my grandchildren.

After years of thinking that I needed to own every book I love, I learned that letting the book go does not decrease my love or memories. I can simply focus on the true favorites. Less is more.

Gay Nell G. German is Youth Services Supervisor at Clayton County Library Systems Northwest Branch