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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

It might be a common assumption in some circles that librarians' home bookshelves are filled with old (and perhaps valuable!) books which hold that prized, musty smell that brings comfort and nostalgia to the hands that long to flip through their pages. While I will admit that one aspect of my idea of a relaxing vacation is leisurely wandering through bookshops in an unfamiliar city, shops that are filled with those types of treasures, I am afraid my personal book collection would not meet such an expectation.

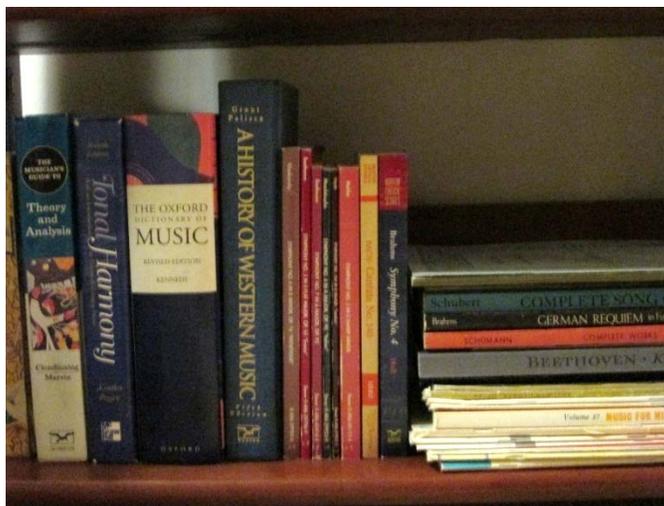
However, a great love of mine is practicing the art of hospitality, and it is a joy to know a guest in my home enjoys perusing my shelves!

The books I own do hold special meaning for me, mostly reflecting the places I've lived in my life—whether representing their geographical significance or the areas of study I pursued while living in those places. Even certain points of travel hold particular memories of reading. In 1999, while traveling for the first time overseas in Great Britain with my sister, we read together Wilkie Collins' haunting mystery, *The Woman in White*.

It was more than a decade ago when I first began more seriously tending to my personal library and gradually finding connections among what I was collecting. In the year or two after college, enjoying a break from structured academic requirements, I was so refreshed to try out some novels by fiction writers that were introduced to me by friends, authors including

J.D. Salinger and Walker Percy. I had held on to my well-loved copy of Grout and Palisca's music history text from my college days as a music major—and still hold on to lasting and wonderful college memories of late night listening and score reading in the dorm!—but eagerly began adding to the collection after I began graduate school in musicology, including theory texts, choral and symphonic scores, and definitely plenty of piano and chamber music

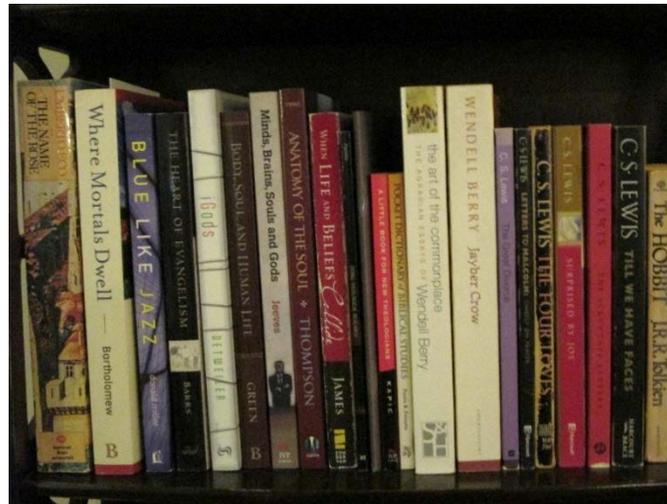
scores. The fact that I moved to the heart of bluegrass in the lovely commonwealth of Kentucky to pursue graduate studies most certainly has influenced my bookshelves over the years. Additionally, in retrospect, perhaps the few years following the world-changing event of 9/11 (the years in which I moved and



began graduate school) instilled in me a love for exploring the works of very American writers, Annie Dillard and Wendell Berry, for instance. I'm naturally drawn to essay writing, and so in the mid-2000s I treasured his *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry*, but I also loved the imaginative descriptions of Berry's novel *Jayber Crow*. As I've grown up with an enjoyment of hiking, travel, and so many things that love of the outdoors can instill, I think these writers' emphasis on geography and place resonate very deeply within me. Following graduate studies, I made it through George Eliot's lengthy *Middlemarch* and loved it! Underlining of favorite passages can be found in my copy of

this novel that is so insightful into human nature.

A move to Georgia also introduced some changes to my bookshelves. As I inherited, among other things, some books that belonged to a grandmother who passed away in 2005, I realized how much I loved learning about my family's heritage. My paternal grandmother had been born in rural Georgia less than one hundred miles south of Atlanta, and I am thankful to have her handwriting detailing names and dates about my ancestors in the blanks of a hardback with a homespun *My Family Heritage* on its spine. Also during this time, I enjoyed Margaret Anne Barnes's chilling detail of the true crime story that occurred in Georgia in 1948, *Murder in Coweta County*.



The past five years of my life have seen more focus on theological writing, especially while being involved in research assistance for a commentary (on a Biblical book) of many

thousands of words! Thus, there are a substantial number of theology and psychology-oriented works on my shelves, many of which I have still to make my way through. While I don't own a complete set of any exegetical commentaries that would be standard for any graduate theological student, I enjoy smaller works by well-known pastors and authors who reflect thoughtfully on sociological and cultural topics of today. In the realm of perspectives on

contemporary relationships, particularly marriage and family, I am proud to have things written by such women as Lauren Winner, Wendy Shalit, Rachel Held Evans, and Christine Colón. However, what I might want most to build in my collection, and read entirely, in the near future are what could

be known as "librarian classics." Among those in 2017...Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*!

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