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My Own PRIVATE LIBRARY

By Kimberly Boyd

I spent my twenties in a huge and derelict house that we all referred to as the ranch. I shared this house with several hundred roommates. This is only a slight exaggeration.

The house was a former horse ranch set on ten wooded acres just off of I-20 and Candler Rd.

The owners rented the place to us as a 3/2 but that really wasn't the half of it. There were three extra bedrooms in the

attic, each with their own bathroom (these were admittedly in a state of squalor) and two more bedrooms in the basement. Who knew such a place could still exist? It wasn't attractive; in fact, it was afflicted with a pretty nasty case of bad sixties western themed kitsch. But it was large and since you could house a small university's student population there, it was as cheap an abode as any college student could ever dream of.

When I moved to the ranch my library could be safely packed into two or three cardboard boxes. It consisted mostly of used paperback fiction and the few texts and other assigned readings that I enjoyed enough not to try to sell at the end of each quarter. You can tell from these books what kind of student I was. Books like *Personal Politics* by Sara Evans and every Woolf treatise and novel under the sun provided hints of a possible Women's Studies degree. Old psychology texts pointed towards an additional psych degree. I just couldn't decide between the two, and I had the credits anyway.



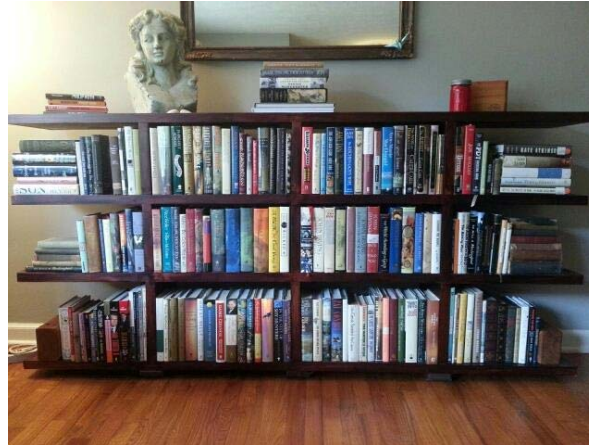
Given all the space I had at the ranch, it was probably inevitable that my collection would grow, and grow it did onto many second hand bookshelves and stacks on the floor. It grew

with some planning and included some signed first editions from my favorite authors because even when I was poor, I was a bibliophile willing to spend some loot on a good, collectible book.

All of this wanton collecting of books ended, however, with the onset of adulthood and the acute desire to never have a roommate again. I found myself packing my books (the first editions and the dime store paperbacks) into several (too many to count) cardboard boxes and moving into a home of my own. My house is small. The whole of it would fit into one floor of the ranch with room to spare. In the move, I left behind my ten dollar thrift store bookshelves along with my twenty dollar thrift store couch. Leaving the book cases was my biggest mistake. I certainly don't regret leaving the couch. I thought that I would move into my house and immediately buy some nice bookcases, but that isn't really how it ever turns out. First, you decide that you really would like a decent sofa. Then you decide that you probably need this, that, and the other until you find yourself six years down the road with a very nice sofa and some lovely antique furniture and your books are still languishing in your attic where you shoved them one frustrating day a month after moving into your house when you

couldn't bear to live in a house of boxes any longer.

I know. My preservation and rare book librarianship professor is probably on the phone with my library school as he reads this, trying to figure out a retroactive way to take my "A" in his class back. I missed my books. Really, I missed them a lot, and I knew that a hot and humid attic was the last place they should be. But, I made a home and decided to go to grad school for librarianship, and the time just got away from me until one day the perfect giant bookcase went up on Craigslist. It takes up a whole wall of my living room. I weeded box after box. You do remember that I mentioned how small my house is? I kept the first editions and most of the hardbacks, and I took the paperbacks that I couldn't bear to part with to my office. The rest went to thrift stores, and I'm mostly happy with that. Surprisingly, only one box had damaged books from its time in the attic. Unfortunately, this box included my copy of *Middlemarch*. If I ever get my hands on whatever squirrel did that...but, I digress. I filled up that giant bookcase with not a lot of room to grow, but I'll figure something out, because the



books are never going in the attic again. It makes me too happy to sit on my sofa and stare deeply into the bookcase, letting my eyes linger on all my favorites including the Atwood and the Cunningham, the Chabon, Irving and the Byatt, as well as the Thackeray and Eliot which my friends make so much fun of.

Just now, my library is lonely. I've been on a gluttonous rampage of fiction reading since I got my books onto shelves again a few months ago but now it's the end of August, and I'm an instruction librarian and what academic librarian or media specialist doesn't know how crazy August and September

can be? What I want to do is re-read *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* in preparation for *MaddAddam*, which will be out at any moment, but instead it will have to wait until I'm not teaching First Year Seminar (FYS) and a million other one-shots. In the meantime, I'm happy just to spend a few moments at the end of the day, letting my eyes wander over them all.

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