

Georgia Library Quarterly

Volume 55
Issue 4 Fall 2018

Article 8

10-1-2018

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

Chelsea B. Gentry

Valdosta State University, cbgentry@valdosta.edu

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

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

Recommended Citation

Gentry, Chelsea B. (2018) "My Own Private Library: A Peek Inside the Personal Library of a Librarian," *Georgia Library Quarterly*: Vol. 55 : Iss. 4 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq/vol55/iss4/8>

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

My personal library includes a personal archive, a section for adoptees, a collection spread out over a mile, and a few international representatives.

The shelves are like a time capsule in the first section, holding books rarely opened now, but that can trace my own graduated learning. It holds a picture book, *Albie the Lifeguard* by Louise Borden, signed by the author at my elementary school's reading festival in 1998, and the first chapter book I completed wholly by myself—a Great Illustrated Classics edition of *The Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum—where I wrote the bubbly letters of my name proudly on the inside of the cover in 1999. This same book caused my very first hallway reprimand by a teacher; I was reading it during a class movie. That section holds the board book, *Open the Door, Little Dinosaur* by Katharine Ross and Norman Gorbaty, that my father, who died in 2009, read to me as a preschooler. It holds a book about a ballerina titled *The Silver Slippers* by Elizabeth Kodacallan that my aunt gave me during a brief childhood flu. The necklace it once included has long since disappeared, but the book remains, as so often is true. This section even holds a schoolbook from 1936, *Pets and Playmates* by William Dodge Lewis and Ethel Maltby Gehres, that was passed down through my family and that I used to learn to read.



My personal library holds books from the strange world that was middle school. An era when I sat in the middle of my bedroom floor, books piled high around me on New Year's Eve 2004, meticulously labelling spines with the Dewey Decimal numbers my local public librarian taught me about. It holds a book of Edgar Allan Poe stories I ferreted away from my high school library in 2009, convincing the school librarian to erase the fine through

persistent begging. It holds books that an erudite older cousin supplied me with by the bagful on laughter-filled book shopping sprees throughout high school. It holds my original copies of the Harry Potter series, including the colorfully highlighted words that I defined later, unable to tear my eyes from the epic unfolding for the first time in 2003. These specific tomes also include my notes from a college-level directed study that I designed with a beloved professor in 2014, examining the shockwaves sent through religious Christian culture

when the series was making its debut...back when I was highlighting.

My personal library includes every textbook I used to earn my bachelor's degree in 2014. Unlike so many of my more financially-conscious classmates, I could not imagine selling these books to an uncertain fate after all they had taught me. These books shaped the way I view the world as much as my own

mother, and I love them fiercely. So, they sit on my shelves, sticky notes still posted to the pages, marginalia still etched along the paragraphs. This section holds a book by my favorite historian that I received in 2014 from my professors in recognition of being an outstanding history student of my year.

The second section of my personal library is a revolving door connected to my local thrift store, which sits across the street from my neighborhood. The shelves at my home are always crowded with the latest paperback I found there through a mining process that unashamedly involves quick judgement of the cover. It includes a special section for books that are on their way back to that same thrift store, as well. I will search for them there in the weeks after donating them, hoping that when they are suddenly absent they have found a dedicated reader. But, if these books stay on the shelf for too long, my heart begins to ache for them. I buy them back from the thrift store (which I have come to think of as the book swap extension of my personal library) and return them to their places in my home, where they will live out their book afterlife.

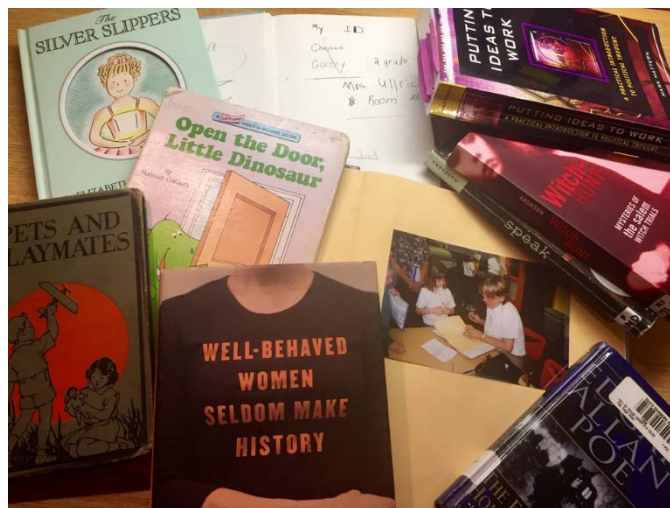
The third section of my personal library is only four years old, plotting a new story in my timeline. These are books I adopted when I

married my wife. She brought her beloved books and placed them alongside my own, after much squeezing and stacking. My hand-painted matryoshka dolls were scooted over by handmade wooden cowboy boot trinket boxes. A split amethyst—a wedding gift—found its place under a limited-edition print from The

Wizarding World of Harry Potter received from my aunt and uncle during our third Christmas together. As a Navy family, it is remarkable to see these books and special shelf adornments travel over great distances and oceans to arrive back on our shelves. It is a small section that will continue to expand, eventually taking over the size of the original collection. This invasion is one that my books and I are happily anticipating.

Finally, the last section of my personal library holds books I cannot read; I will probably never read these books because they are in languages I do not understand. This

collection holds the first three Harry Potter books, bought in honor of the countries I have visited. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in Italian sits with gleaming gold stars on its cover, purchased in 2012 on a busy back street in Florence during a college study abroad trip. *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* is found there in French, bought from Amazon in honor of a trip to Haiti in 2013 (I could not find



a Haitian Creole version of the book and had to settle for this copy instead). *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* is present in Arabic. My wife and I bought this book during a trip to a giant, glittering mall in Bahrain while she was stationed there in 2014. I am not sure where the rest of the series will come from, but I am determined to finish the set!

My personal library holds unique and personally historic holdings. It is full of emotional

connections, puzzling languages, handwritten notes, recent adoptees, and new still-to-be-read volumes. It is a well-travelled collection, conceived in Indiana, carted in part to Bahrain, and currently residing in Georgia.

Above all else, my personal library is a living and cherished collection.

*Chelsea B. Gentry is Library Services Specialist
at University of North Florida*