

8-1-2023

## Our Favorite Patron Moments

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### Recommended Citation

Williams, K. E., Wilson, M. W., Wise, L., Megaw, A., Stapley, P., Young, H., Vetsch, R., & Hoffman, A. T. (2023). Our Favorite Patron Moments. *Georgia Library Quarterly*, 60(3). Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq/vol60/iss3/7>

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## Our Favorite Patron Moments

By Kelly E. Williams, Michael W. Wilson, Liz Wise, Angela Megaw,  
Pam Stapley, Heidi Young, Rick Vetsch, and Ashley T. Hoffman

*N*ightmare stories about troublesome patrons are easy and often cathartic to share, but in this article we're highlighting some of the great interactions that keep us coming back to this often-thankless job. Whether it's hearing that our résumé assistance helped someone get their first job, or a student got an A thanks to our research help, or just that being a friendly ear made someone's day, people working in libraries across Georgia are doing hard work every day. Hearing about the good times creates a sense of camaraderie within our vocation. Helping patrons is at the very center of our purpose as librarians, and the work we do is rewarding, gratifying, and often humorous in its own way. Enjoy!

*Kelly E. Williams is a supervisory librarian at Gwinnett County Public Library*

There are many (possibly apocryphal) stories of individuals coming to the reference desk and asking for "the works of Shakespeare translated into English" or "an actual photograph, not a drawing, of Jesus, Moses, a dinosaur," etc. I did, in fact, have a patron come to the reference desk asking for a photograph of a dinosaur, and I had to explain delicately why such a thing could not exist. Subsequently, I was relating this story to someone, who laughed uproariously, then said, "That is so silly. Everyone knows that photographs don't last that long."

*Michael W. Wilson is the librarian at The Art Institute of Atlanta & Virginia Beach*

I have been working at a public library for a little over a year and the one thing that never gets old

and always sends me right back to the time I checked out my first book is when a small child warily approaches the front desk with a stack of books to ask the eternal question: "How many books can I check out?" And when I tell them "50!" The joy and relief that sweeps over their little face, barely able to peek over the counter, is just precious!

*Liz Wise is a library assistant at Harris County Public Library*

This memory is from October 2013, and it is still one of my treasured memories of being a librarian: I had a student come to the desk and ask if we had any lotion. I happen to keep a bottle in my bottom desk drawer. His response: "You are the coolest librarian I have ever met." I didn't know that unscented lotion made one "cool."

*Angela Megaw is a reference services librarian at University of North Georgia*

I was working a shift at the Walnut Grove Library when I saw a young gentleman carrying in a very large stack of heavy books. I commented, "What big muscles you have!" Without missing a beat, he said, "I got them by lifting books!"

*Pam Stapley is a librarian at Walnut Grove Library*

Recently, at the Monroe-Walton County Library, I had a heartwarming interaction with an older patron. He was taking a class and wanted an audiobook version of his book. Although I couldn't provide it immediately, I offered him an alternative. I asked if I could find the book in large print, and he stated his issue was one he'd

had all his life: the lines of text on the page would jumble together and it made reading difficult so it would be easier for him to hear it. I suggested Libby or Hoopla, but he declined the “new” technology. Remembering a solution that helped a friend with reading difficulties, I created a line reader using cardstock. It allowed him to read one line at a time without the text jumbling together. The patron was thrilled with the idea and happily took his book and the line reader.

*Heidi Young is a librarian at Monroe-Walton County Library*

Recently, at O’Kelly Memorial Library, I had the opportunity to assist a man with applying for a job. He had relocated to Georgia to care for his ailing mother and decided to stay after her passing. He had an interview for a corrections officer position but needed help navigating the application process, including uploading multiple documents. We worked together to set up an email, scan, and download the necessary paperwork, and successfully upload them to the website. I went above and beyond my usual hours to ensure he had the support he needed. A few days later, he returned to express his gratitude and share the news that he had secured the job. The library played a vital role in his job search, as there are limited resources available

for such assistance in our county. Being a part of his journey toward employment was truly rewarding.

*Rick Vetsch is the branch manager at O’Kelly Memorial Library*

It may be counterintuitive, but I think some of the most rewarding experiences I’ve had with students have been the ones where I helped them with nonlibrary problems. For example, last year while I was working at Kennesaw State University I had a frazzled patron (who may have been a student or may have just been a desperate community member) who was trying to apply for a job and was stuck trying to upload the résumé, which she had created in some elaborate design suite and saved as a weird file type that was both too large to upload and incompatible with the application portal. After half an hour of fiddling with the file, we were able to get the résumé uploaded and the application submitted. The patron turned to me with sincere respect and said, “You really know your \*\*\*\*, don’t you?” I’ve never been prouder to show off what librarians can do (I hope she got the job, too)!

*Ashley T. Hoffman is editor of the Georgia Library Quarterly*