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The Heart of a Librarian

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The heart of this librarian began to form at the age of three when I was first introduced to the magic of libraries. I wanted to live there, to curl up on a bookshelf at night and simply stay. Having grown up in small-town Oregon, the only libraries I knew were the tiny, volunteer-run variety open two or three days a week. Yet, they never ceased to delight me. To me, the people who sat at the desk were my ticket to the entire world and beyond. No matter what I wanted to know or read, they found it for me.

Although my enthusiasm for libraries never faded, it wasn't until my children were born that I seriously contemplated a professional relationship with my beloved libraries. Attending weekly storytimes at the small town library with my children put me under the spell of Blythe Jorgensen. Her enthusiasm was contagious and my budding interest in children's librarianship blossomed under her mentorship. After ten years of workshops, classes, and storytimes, I was hired for my first (and so far only) job as a children's librarian.

What a surprise to discover that librarianship was so much more than storytimes and reference desk hours. As a librarian, people expected me to know everything—well, almost—or at least be able to find it. From the exact date of Tzar Alexander's execution to snoring remedies, I heard it all. A funny thing happened over the years: I found that I could answer these questions, or at least confidently know how to go about doing so.

It was an even greater revelation to discover what being a children's librarian had done for me outside the library. I'm popular! I'm often stopped in the grocery store by a "knee-hugger" whose parent looks on with consternation as a child attaches herself to me and declares that she loves me, my stories, and most especially, my mascot, Lawrence the Library Bunny. It's also not uncommon to find myself processing a reference query for someone while standing in the line at the bank. Then there's always the race down the halls at one of the schools to act as a courier of materials overdue to their library but improperly returned to ours. And of course, my favorite: doing reader's advisory everywhere I go.

As significant as these outward developments are, the changes to my inner self are even more profound. At one time, the thought of speaking to 600 high school



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students at an all school assembly was enough to bring on an anxiety attack. Now, just the anticipation sharpens all my senses! I go into overdrive and expect that what I say and do

will be received with some degree of success. It is that absolute expectation of success that most amazes me. Furthermore, the confidence gained after presenting thousands of such programs to all different types of people seeps into many aspects of my life. I now find myself at family reunions, company picnics, or large gatherings of any kind being the one who readily steps forward when a "director" is required. If an invitation to speak is given, my hand is up.

Another quality that has carried over from my work as a librarian is an amazing ability to organize anything. Summer reading programs demand the absolute most when it comes to detail and follow-up. This trait has transferred to home life in unexpected ways. In my previous life, I "piled, not filed." Now, my grocery list gets written down in order of the aisles at my favorite store and the bookcases at home are organized by Dewey, sans the spine labels. Thanks to this organizational expertise, I've had a number of sublime moments when an event that I've coordinated goes off flawlessly.

All these qualities have been a great benefit to my life, but what I treasure most is the standing I've earned with the children of my community. Being loved by innumerable children is a benefit that I never envisioned when I began this work. Knowing that children and parents trust me implicitly fills me with pride as well as an awesome responsibility to merit that stature and the privilege. It reaffirms my underlying belief in being ever upright and true, for there are always little ones watching, and learning from me. Librarianship keeps me honest. 📖

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