

Just Another Quiet Day at the Library

Whenever I tell new people I meet that I work at the library, one of the first things they say is, "Wow, it must be nice to work at such a quiet and relaxing place." If only that were true....

The very word library conjures up images of dark rooms full of dusty books and large study tables teeming with serious researchers that are engrossed in their studies. Featured is an old woman librarian with a tight bun staring at you from behind the large and imposing desk as if she is daring you to utter a sound and has her shushing finger at the ready, just in case.

However, the library of today is a much different place than it used to be and on most days it is not quiet at all. Let's look at some things that happen in a typical day at the library.

When we open at 8:30am we always have several patrons waiting at the door ready to take advantage of our computers- free internet, Microsoft Office Software, scanning capabilities, etc... Often, we are called upon to give our expertise in internet matters. Whether it be to help a patron sign up for unemployment, search through the job listings, apply for a job, sign up for an email account, or simply get a game started to pass the day, we are here to help.

At the reference desk we also handle many questions from patrons throughout the day that are as wide ranging as the patrons we serve. We get phone calls to find telephone numbers, addresses, and driving directions. We also answer more complicated reference questions like finding the official date of the annexation of East Columbus (which involved several hours of searching through the back issues of *The Republic*), what celebrations were being held around the country to honor the 200th birthday of Abraham Lincoln, or what book could we recommend to a mystery fan that has read all of the books written by her favorite author. We handle any and all questions and will search until we find the answer or can direct the patron to someplace that is better able to help out.

Over at the circulation desk, they have been busy since we opened checking in items that were placed in the book drop the night before. In the midst of that they check patrons out and make sure they return all their materials on time. If not, they collect the fines and sometimes have to stand up to a patron that refuses to pay what they owe. They check in items throughout the day, clean the DVDs and audio CDs so that they will play their best, and finally return the items back to their rightful place on the shelf so that the next person can find it.

Almost every evening (and some afternoons) we have a program (or two) going on. They include everything from storytime for the kids to our new law series and everything in between. Staff members work very hard to plan these programs and staff them so that you our patrons can come to be entertained, enlightened, or both. All of our upcoming programs can be found at our website www.barth.lib.in.us.

I can use many terms to describe my job- fun, exciting, unpredictable, enjoyable, helping others- however, quiet is not one of them!

Jason Hatton is the Library Services Manager at the Bartholomew County Public Library.