

Can I have some books along with that Computer Game?

Effective Immediately: In order to play computer games at the library you must first spend at least 20 minutes reading a book. Okay, that's really not a rule even though I wish it were. Anyone who has visited the children's department lately between the hours of 3:00 and 7:00 know that we have quite a few kids who like to play computer games at the library after school. They rush over as soon as school lets out and we have standing room only waiting to get on the internet to play. It makes me very happy to see kids so excited about coming to the library and at the same time very sad to see that some are missing out on what I think are the best things we have to offer.

Bradley, who is seven, was very upset when I told him he had reached his time limit on the computer and it was time to go do something else. He looked up at me with huge eyes and said "but there's nothing else to do here". Ouch. I also had this same conversation with Luke (age 12) the day before, and Anna (age 9) the day before that. Charles (age 4) decided on Thursday that he would much rather play on the computer than come to story time. I know I can tell a pretty good story, I just can't compete with Bob the Builder. I try not to take it too personally.

So what are we to do? How do we make sure we provide for the needs of our small patrons and help them not lose sight of the joy to be found in the simple act of reading a good book? I have been pondering this question a lot lately and so you can imagine my reaction when my supervisor recently informed me that we would be looking into the possibility of establishing a collection of video games (Wii, Playstation, Xbox) which would be available for check out. After picking my jaw up off the floor, uttering a very Charlie Brown-ish AARGH and stopping to have a thoughtful moment, I decided that this was actually a very exciting opportunity for the library and its patrons.

The mission of Bartholomew County Public Library is to provide resources for life-long learning and enjoyment and whether that comes via computer, Xbox or book, it is our job to make those resources available. The challenge I put forth to you is to make sure that you take time to share with your children. Explore how they are using the library. If you discover that they are checking out just movies and games, let me know and I can point out a great selection of books to go along with the games they like. When they start pulling what they learn from books into their game play just watch out! They are going to have more fun and you are going to get a child who still knows how to sit down and read a book.

So let's get together and make sure that your Hot Wheels gamer learns all he can about cars or your Barbie fan gets to dress her up on the computer AND read all about her. I'll do my part to make sure you can find everything you need, and together we can make sure that learning and enjoyment still go hand in hand.

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