

Library Ramblings

by: Christopher Malo

Libraries

I love libraries. For a few reasons.

One reason is that I love buying stuff. I am not a shop-a-holic but just like millions of others, I love to consume. And I love books. For varied reasons. One is surely escapism. Another is to learn. (Funny how one reason is to get away away from the world and the other is to bring it closer...) As an addict and someone who is perpetually fearful of running out, there is comfort and safety in the knowledge that I will never run out of material to read.

The "to read" pile grows exponentially greater than my ability to keep pace, let alone make a dent in it. I am forever adding books to my Amazon wishlist. (Looking for a birthday/Christmas/anniversary present idea?) While I can bore of TV, movies or music, books just don't dull to me. And when I say books, I don't mean reading. I mean the physical evidence of tree slaughter in my hands. The touch, the feel. They say don't judge a book by it's cover. But I do. I realize that may sound blasphemous, but it's also a reality. And in my old(er) age, I care less and less what people think of me. I am fine with the label of judgmental or shallow or missing out or prejudicial or what-may-have you. The books I do pick up to read and entertain and expand me don't seem to mind. And since they aren't in short supply...

But back to the library. I remember years ago when I had that decades too late epiphany about the brilliance and excitement of a library. There's all these fucking books. Thousands and thousands and thousands of them. And they are new (to me) and each one contains a new world that may or may not interest me, that I may or may not like, that I may or may not care about. But the possibility of all the above is right in front of me. And repeated those thousands of times over. So any time I go in the library, I feel like I am going shopping, about to bring something I want home with me and it cost me nothing. And if I don't like it I can bring it back. And if I do like it I can bring it back, and buy a copy later.

There's a few libraries that Mom took me to growing up. While not remembering anything specific sticking out, I do remember spending time there and it fills me with some sort of nostalgia. I always mean to see if they are still there when I go back home, but sadly they seem to slip down the memory/priority list. Maybe next time.

I think this next point is not completely relevant, but I wanted to mention it regardless. Massive quantities of books makes me have to shit. Ever since I was a kid. Bookstores or libraries. My mom knows it. My sister knows it. All my girlfriends know it. Guaranteed I will be taking a dump at some point. Want to leave and can't find Chris? Good odds are he is going number two.

I also find it curious that with all the fighting about copyright laws, both as far as music and tv and film, that the idea of libraries, a place where you can take a book for free, share it, hasn't seem to of been a huge problem for bookstores. Were they first up in arms when the notion of buying a copy and then lending it out came up? I wonder what the future of libraries hold with the move to digital readers. Is it the end of libraries as we know them? Or all together?

I stopped buying books, unless I want to refer to them, they inspire me, or I know I will re-read them. Now I just go to the library. Sadly, in Philly, they are constantly under the threat of being closed because the city is always in a state of perpetual fucked-upness.

I always admire the librarians who stand up to the government on issues such as privacy or censorship. Those lil old ladies do sure have a backbone. And the fact that you have to get a degree in Library Studies to work there? Crazy! I recently found out that my friend from my old job who always gave me the best music and book suggestions has his fucking Masters in Library & Information Studies. What the fuck? I thought Philosophy was a pretty limiting degree... Wow. And how about the Dewey decimal system? Antiquated or not?