

The Story of a Library
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Like a good book, a library tells a story. My personal library reveals my own story: it demonstrates my love for fiction, it tells of my many and varied hobbies, it relates my fondness of history. If arranged in chronological order, it reveals a lot about my development through the years as my reading interests and abilities have changed. It even tells the story of my past, in the books passed down to me from my mother, my grandmother, and my great-grandmother. This is not just a story about the corner I dedicated to the bookshelves, nor is it the story of the middle of the room, so recently conquered by the stacks that no longer fit in the corner. This is the story of my bookshelves as they have grown through the years, from the time I was a child all the way through school, and now into my adulthood and college career. It is a story of stories; it is the ever-changing story of a library.

Like any child, I loved stories. Some of my favorite childhood stories included books such as *The Secret Garden*, *Charlotte's Web*, and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Along with books of my own, I have books passed on to me by my mother and grandmother. *Heidi*, an almost complete collection of Nancy Drew books, and the stories of Laura Ingalls Wilder are among the many books I have inherited. Though my literary interests have matured over the years, my bookshelf still harbors children's stories like *Pollyanna*, the orphaned girl whose mission was to make other people glad, as well as *The Jungle Book*, the story of the boy who was raised by wolves, and *The Wizard of Oz*. These books and many others were my introduction to the world of reading, and I soon discovered a love for fantasy. My mother read the stories of C.S. Lewis to my brother and me when we were very small, and I went from *The Chronicles of Narnia* to other fantasies including *The Princess and Curdie*, one of my favorite George MacDonald stories. After reading the works of Lewis and MacDonald, I began to read the work of J.R.R. Tolkien, a good friend of Lewis and another writer of great fantasy. I quickly picked up *The Hobbit*, and was lost in the tales of hobbits and dwarfs, wizards and dragons. I was a prolific reader, and I devoured almost every book I could get my hands on.

During my high school and pre-college years, my collection of books expanded to include short stories and novels such as *Jane Eyre*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, and *The Innocence of Father Brown*. Of course, along with the growth of my literary repertoire came the expansion of my fantasy collection. C.S. Lewis quickly became one of my favorite authors; once I finished his children's stories I moved on to read the Space Trilogy. I thought *Perelandra* was lacking in grace, but I loved *That Hideous Strength*. As I persistently read C.S. Lewis, I also continued to read those who had inspired him. One of Lewis's contemporaries, J.R.R. Tolkien was the writer of a very complex and creative fantasy entitled *The Lord of the Rings*. *The Silmarillion* and *Unfinished Tales* are two other books written by Tolkien, and provide a fascinating insight into the history and

even the language that he wrote for his imaginary world. It amazed me that he wrote an entire language for elves that is almost functional, and a history of Middle-earth which includes a creation story, from which I drew many parallels to Tolkien's Christian faith. George MacDonald also inspired Lewis, and he wrote many of the books in my fantasy collection. Among these are *The Light Princess*, a girl who was cursed to be without gravity, and *The Day Boy and the Night Girl*, a strange tale of a boy who had never seen the dark and a girl who had never seen the light. Along with their fantasies, I became intrigued by the theological writings of Lewis and MacDonald, and my collection expanded to include *Mere Christianity* and *The Problem of Pain*, as well as a host of Lewis's other works. I soon became interested in theology and picked up books by Francis Schaeffer, Saint Augustine, G.K. Chesterton, Ravi Zacharias, and many others. My theological interests also inspired me to read biographies of famous Christians such as George Mueller, Isaac Newton, Martin Luther, Florence Nightingale, and countless others. My interest in history influenced my reading of biographies as well, to the effect that my biography collection diversified considerably. I discovered a love for history during my high school years, and I began to scrape the surface of the massive amount of historical writing available. I read about the Greeks and Romans, the history of the Vikings, the histories of Egypt and Israel, and the histories of France, England and the United States. My grandparents fed my history appreciation by bringing home books of the *Horrible Histories* series, which I found to be endlessly entertaining. Reading was my key to history and the world, and I always had a book or two on hand. Once I started reading a book, I could not put it down.

Since coming to college, my library has fallen into disuse. With little time to read, I am forced to skim books that would normally consume my evenings. *The Pursuit of God*, by A.W. Tozer, lies on top of the pile of books that I have skimmed, but I cannot find time to read. *Moby Dick*, a book borrowed from my great-grandmother, has hardly been touched. Books from my classes are piled high between the bookshelves; there are textbooks with information on communication, art, math, history, and science. Even after the class has ended, the books linger on the shelves; books from literature classes are stacked nearby, in hope that one day I can read through them more carefully. English, French, and Spanish textbooks take up a large area of floor space, along with children's books in French and Spanish to help me learn and practice. There are English, Spanish and French dictionaries and thesauruses littering my desk, since frequent use eliminates the need to put them away. Meanwhile, books detailing my hobbies are stacked on the bottom shelf, awaiting my release from homework. Knitting, playing the violin, cooking edible wild plants, and caring for horses and other livestock have all been put on hold. My field guides to flowers, birds, and trees lie waiting with my binoculars for the day that I can take to the woods again in search of new wildlife. Everything is waiting for that magical moment of freedom, the time that never seems to come, when I will have a few quiet moments just to read.

Until then, and afterwards as I grow older and increase in learning, my library will continue to expand. Someday it will include more reference material, Asian history, and maybe a couple more languages will join the French and Spanish in the corner. A few more school books will join the collection, and the pile of books I want to read will diminish and grow as I read and find new books and hobbies. One day a space will be cleared on the bottom, and my books and the books of my ancestors will make room for the books of my children. Generations of reading material will continue to crowd my shelf, and as I and my family grow and learn, my library will change as well. New shelves will be added as family members increase, and new subjects will find room next to the old. The legacy I leave for my children is the legacy of stories, history and information that my ancestors left for me. All of this is just a part of life's ongoing story; it is the story of a library.