

LIBRARIES SUPPORT FAMILY MEMBERS OF ALL AGES

by Susanna-Judith Rae



Indiana libraries have long supported my family. When toddlers, my children enjoyed “story hour.” In the early ‘70s, how exciting it was when my son Robby, about three years old, was on the local news as one of the first patrons of the Indianapolis Marion County Public Library’s (IMCPL) brand new Southport branch. On more than one trip to the main branch of the IMCPL, elementary school-aged Mike and I turned microfilm reels in order to read headlines, weather, birth announcements, and other engrossing news of February 4, 1972, the day of Mike’s birth. (His being born in the car on the way to St. Francis Hospital—when the wind chill factor was 28 degrees below zero—made it even more intriguing.)

As Mike and I kept turning the microfilm reels, Rob set about locating books on Native Americans, racecars, favorite comedians, and other topics of interest to his junior high-aged mind. Rob not only checked out tall stacks of books of various sizes, he read their content.

Both Rob and Mike seemed as enthralled as I always had been over looking at photographs collected in the Indiana Historical Society’s Library. Both brothers even thought it “cool” to wear the white, cotton gloves to prevent finger acid from damaging the photographic historical documents. Perhaps the boys felt somewhat like scientists performing important research.

Adult Mike and Rob now live in the Chicago area. Rob’s children, eight year-old Emily and five year-old Dalton, have eagerly heard Nana Babushka read books checked out of Indiana libraries and transported across state lines for weekend visits. In 2004 Mike’s two year-old daughter, Janie, enjoyed the IMCPL’s Infozone at the Children’s Museum. While Janie plopped down on the multi-colored pillows of various sizes, looked at books, and played with toys, her dad and I reminisced about library adventures of her dad’s youth. Perhaps someday I will also introduce Janie and her recently born brother, Charlie, to the thrill of looking up headlines for their dates of birth. Likely a computer, rather than a microfilm reader, will be used.

Nowadays, as a part-time IUPUI student, I use that library as well as Avon-Washington Township library and the IMCPL, where I borrow books, magazines, audiotapes, videotapes, and CDs. Indiana librarians

continue to be as helpful as always. It’s no wonder children learn early that the librarian is a friend!

At home nowadays writing and caring for my husband, Earl Hoppert, I appreciate that the IMCPL co-sponsors helpful programs with the Alzheimer’s Association and other groups. Libraries have brought reading back to Earl, who used to love to read history, biographies, and mysteries. Though Earl has not read a book for years, he now enjoys listening to Recorded Books as I drive and he sits next to me. Dorothy Gilman’s Mrs. Pollifax mystery series, about a delightful and resourceful elderly woman who the CIA uses as a spy, is a favorite for both of us. Though I’ve lost Earl to a dreaded, progressive, terminal illness, my husband returns to me for a while as we hold hands and listen to audiotapes from the library.

Yes, Indiana libraries and librarians have supported my family throughout our lives. We agree with Archibald MacLeish (1972) who said, “But what is more important in a library than anything else—than everything else—is the fact that it exists” (p. 357).

REFERENCES

MacLeish, A. (1972, June 5). The premise of meaning. *American Scholar*, 41, 357-362.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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