

Librarians! What Are We Hiding?

by Roz Warren

I've worked behind the circulation desk of my local public library for 15 years and I love my job. But that job has gone through plenty of changes. When I began, library work was all about the books. These days, while our patrons still check out books, they also come in to use our computers, borrow DVDs and audio books, and learn how to download "content" onto a staggering variety of electronic devices.

Meanwhile, staffing is being cut, and the public encouraged to use our automatic check out system, and to pay their fines and renew their material online.

So are librarians still relevant? Useful? What does being a 21st century librarian mean, really? Who exactly are we? And how does the world see us? I decided to perform a quick Google search and find out.

I typed in the phrase "Librarians are..." and here's how Google's auto-fill completed the thought:

Generals in the war on ignorance
Weird.
Annoying
Novel lovers
Hiding something
Obsolete.
Awesome.
Hot.
Great people.
Heroes every day.

Am I a novel lover? Absolutely. Hot? I'd like to think so. A hero every day? Well, I do feel a little heroic whenever I am able to intuit where a book that a patron is desperate to read has been mis-shelved, and deliver it safely into her hands.

Still, sensing that I didn't yet have the complete picture, I decided to fine tune my results by running a few more librarian-related questions through my favorite search engines. (Yes, I've got favorite search engines. How librarial is that?)

Being a librarian is...

Great

Stressful

Hard

Boring.

(I'd say it was all of the above.)

A librarian is...

A trained information specialist.

Coming to dinner.

Stacked.

Librarians should...

Read.

Rule the internet.

Know.

Know how to spell.

How do librarians...

Choose books?

Use math?

Help the community?

Make money?

Librarians can't...
Save the world.
Buy me love.
Help falling in love.

Why Do librarians...
Love their jobs?
Make more money than teachers?
Make less money than garbage collectors?

Librarians Need To...
Know about math.
Know about MOOCs..
Know everything.

Librarians can...
Help struggling readers.
Change the world.
Work from home.
Have tattoos.

Librarians enjoy...
The silence.
Life.
Shampoo.
The ride.

Sadly, when I typed in: "Your librarian..." the only result I got was:
Hates you.

(Which, it turns out, is the name of one disgruntled librarian's
website.)

And finally?

Librarians never...
Die. They just check out.

So what can we conclude? We librarians are awesome. We can help struggling readers. We can have tattoos. We can't help falling in love. But we can (still) help change the world.

Is any of this accurate? Who knows? If you want to talk about it, you'll find me behind the circulation desk at the Bala Cynwyd Library.

Unless I'm at the tattoo parlor.

