
Fear of librarians

Leah Klimionok

Fear is an irrational thing...for I am sure that the librarian at my school never issued any direct death threats, nor did she indicate that, if I asked another question, some hired hit-man would find me on my next recess and break my knee caps. However, terror reigned in the library.

The librarian was an older lady who obviously hated her job and children with equal passion. We were made to feel stupid for asking questions; she treated everything (except her current knitting or crocheting project) as an intrusion to her day. She was simply unpleasant and intimidating. This did not aid our quest for learning, as we fumbled around trying to find things and, in a rather childish way, gave up too quickly.

In my forties, I decided to get a degree and enrolled in College. There was only one problem—I would have to use a library! The fear came flooding back, the irrational belief that I was too stupid to manoeuvre my way around a library—and at forty something, isn't one expected to know how? This was not just intimidating but embarrassing as well!

There was no way around it—I walked into the college library feeling overwhelmed by the rows and rows of books and admitting to the librarian sheepishly that I was literally terrified, not quite sure if I could face this!

Jan, the librarian was as helpful, friendly and supportive as anyone could have been. She painstakingly and patiently showed me how to access material, how to search for things, how the system worked, and assured me she would be happy to be of assistance any time I came to the library—which she was.

For four years she was there for me, repeating things I had forgotten and above all, encouraging me. As a result of her persistently positive attitude, I gradually became more and more comfortable with the college library. Without her help I could not have obtained my degree. I am enormously indebted to Jan for her support and friendship.

Librarians truly make a huge contribution to every student—thanks!

[What a personal testimony! 'Jan' is our own Jan Barwick, Librarian of Tabor College, Adelaide. Ed.]

from previous page

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