The library at Elsewhere University may be prone to unpredictable time patterns, nameless librarians, and L-space irregularities, but cataloguing, interlibrary loan charges, temperamental elevators, and waiving overdue fines are universal.

Notes

Tagged as library AU, because it's a library, in an alternate universe..
Part One: A Student's Guide to Library Services

Welcome to the Elsewhere University Library. This guide endeavours to provide students with a general outline of library services, facilities, and safety precautions. More comprehensive help, including study guides for planning your research, finding books and journal articles, evaluating and citing sources, and safely navigating the library both with and without a map, compass, or bread crumb trail can be found online on the library's website, in print at the first floor reference desk, and translated into Norse runes and carved into the foundation of the condemned building in the west quadrant of the campus.

Instructors wishing to book a tour and orientation for incoming classes can make arrangements directly with the subject librarian assigned to their department. Basic research skills and bibliographic instruction for classes is a core services provided to all faculty. Advanced research support may be obtained with proof of approved interdepartmental charge. Payment will be extracted at the campus health centre, or during one of the library's monthly fundraising blood drives. A pound of flesh is no longer accepted in payment, as the exchange rate is currently exorbitant. Requests from the biology department will be assessed on a case by case basis until the overdue accounts resulting from the escaped blood scandal last fall are resolved.

Borrowing privileges for undergraduates and non-academic staff include a semester-long loan period with no renewals, and a maximum of three interlibrary loans per course per year. The length of the semester is determined by time passing within the registrar's office, and no exceptions will be made for the west quadrant of the campus, philosophy majors, or those born on a Tuesday. Library staff, and RAs and custodial staff assigned to Brigadoon Hall are eligible for an exemption, however. Please ensure that circulation staff are advised of your status upon yearly renewal of your library card, and keep in mind that time passes differently within the library.

Graduate students and faculty are eligible for a year-long loan period, and unlimited interlibrary loans. Additional charges for interlibrary loan material may be passed on to the borrower. Library staff will do their best to ensure that you are aware of the procedures and policies of the lending institute, however, can take no responsibility for additional fees and fines accrued. Arrangements for payment must be made directly with the lending institute. We do not have the liability insurance required to send your first-born, existential sense of dread, or the memory of the colour of next spring's tulips via interoffice mail or interagency courier. Please note that while all graduate theses are archived in the library collection, borrowing privileges for theses that have not yet been written are limited to faculty only.

Overdue fines may be waived at the discretion of the library staff for just cause. Fees for lost items must be paid by the end of the semester or late charges will continue to accrue. Nonpayment of fees and fines may result in withholding of your final transcript, degree, sense of smell, or sense of self. Barter for tangible, non-monetary items will not be accepted as payment, with the exception of plastic beads. Intangible items may be accepted on a case by case basis. Baked goods are always appreciated, but will have no effect on the balance of your account. (Donations of plastic beads will be accepted at the circulation desk, and will be donated to the library's current community support program, who is welcome to join us in the library foyer, coffee shop, and first floor classroom space, but we would appreciate it if it refrains from attempting to use the elevators to reach the rooftop garden.)

Most items in the library's collections can be located using the online catalogue, available through
the library website and on workstations at various points throughout the library. Some items are only noted in the physical card catalogue, which can be found in the second sub-basement. It is not advisable to use the card catalogue without first completing an advanced research methods class, and the related safety certification and training.

The first floor houses circulation and reference services, classroom space, and current periodicals. Current is a relative term. The most recent issue does not circulate. Recent is a relative term. No exceptions are made for issues with a future date, or periodicals where the most recent issue predates the founding of the university. The photocopiers will accept coins in any denomination, currency, from any era or locale. Change returned to you will be in local currency based on this month's exchange rate as posted at the circulation desk.

Group study rooms may be booked via the circulation desk. Please show up promptly for your scheduled time, and respect others by vacating the premises in a timely fashion if another group is booked into the timeslot immediately adjacent to your own. In the event of time slips or other distortions, priority can be determined by binding arbitration in the court of the King of the Cats, ranking in the school's annual competitive macramé tournament, or if all involved parties have appropriate appendages and digits, via rock-paper-scissors. It is advisable to collect all personal belongings and count off to ensure that you are not leaving the study rooms with any additional members to the group. If you are short a member, please check at the lost and found as you leave the library. Missing posters may be left at the circulation desk, and will be shared with the weekly search parties before they enter the stacks. In the light of recent events, it is also recommended that all study group users account for their shadows when entering and leaving the room.

Reference and research help can be obtained during regular library open hours at the first-floor reference desk, in the learning commons on the second floor, and under the waxing moon, in the rooftop courtyard garden that is not accessible by elevator or by stairs. Please note that just because reference librarians know how to find just about anything, it is not always wise to ask them to do so.

The second-floor learning commons is comprised of group study space, the computer lab, and the academic writing centre. The writing centre offers drop-in help during the fall and winter semesters, and by appointment year-round. They are happy to provide you with the current list of verboten phrases and recommended alternatives that is assembled and updated yearly by the students' union. They are happy to assist you up to three times with the same assignment or essay. They are happy to explain the best way to cite your sources. They are not happy to review papers and assignments that do not cite their sources and do, in fact, claim other sources as their own words. They call this plagiarism, as does the rest of the academic community on and off campus. Theft of words is a serious offense, and all staff and faculty are honour bound to bring it to the attention of the Dean's office and to library management. We do not advise that undergraduates attract the attention of library management.

The computer lab is for research and accessing digital resources. Don't look too closely at the patterns in the floor tiles in that room. You'll just give yourself a headache, and may forget why you came and when your next assignment is due, and possibly what courses you're taking this semester as well as your middle name and the number of your dorm room. The subscriptions to the online databases does not come without a cost.

The second floor is reinforced for earthquakes, and for the load weight of the microfilm and microfiche archives. Microfilm is a surprisingly stable archival format, and can be viewed using the microfilm readers by the elevator, the scanner in the second-floor computer lab, or for those with access to the rooftop garden, a drop of water to magnify, a sunbeam as a light source, and a patch of bare earth to capture the image. You will notice that the space taken up by the microfiche
archives appears quite small for the structural reinforcement undertaken several decades ago. Chemistry, earth sciences, computing sciences, and mechanical sciences and engineering collections are on the second floor, and those are definitely not iron bound shelves.

The library vending machines, on the first and third floors, are the only ones on campus that never dispense teeth, although any time but finals week, you run the risk of getting a fortune cookie and a cup of strong black tea, no matter what you've selected. Pay close attention to the fortune in your cookie. There is an exception for finals week, when it's nothing but metal washers, and green tea and sugar cookies shaped into tiny, intricate stars. Do not arrange your star cookies into constellations. It is worth noting that the only other thing that the library vending machines will dispense with a ninety percent success rate is instant ramen.

Humanities, fine arts, health science, biological and social sciences collections are all housed on standard steel shelving, floors three to six. The language and literature collections are known to be the most unpredictable areas in regards to the passage of time. Plan accordingly. Study space is available on the third, fifth, and seventh floors. Additional silent study can be found in the first and second sub-basements.

Do not expect to come back to the same season that you left if you choose to study on the seventh floor. The seventh floor is one of the few parts of the library where the collection is housed on wooden shelving. Massively sturdy banks of shelves stretch out in meandering aisles, marked by sunlight and dappled shade. The classification system is different on the seventh floor. So is the alphabet used for the spine labels. If you have bargained, traded, or borrowed for the call number of a book on this floor, write it on a scrap of paper under a waning moon. Do not write it on your hand, arm, or other body part you wish to retain. Bring the paper with you, but be prepared for it to vanish when you step out of the stairwell. (The elevator doesn't stop at the seventh floor.) Don't worry, though, an unerring sense of certainty will lead you to the book you seek. Take only one volume at a time. Don't stray from the path. Carry your iron, your salt, and your rowan twigs. If you are lucky, you will return with at least two out of three. It doesn't hurt to bring a scone from the first-floor coffee shop, either. Please note, all beverages should be contained in a cup or bottle with a lid or cap. It's not that it's unsafe, you understand, but it is a library, after all.

The eighth floor is staff offices and storage. Not office and processing supplies, which are on the first floor with circulation and reference services. Not archives, which are held off-site. Far off-site. Don't ask what's stored on the eighth floor. That is not for you to know. Only the librarians.

The rare books are held in special collections on the uppermost ninth floor. A multiple of three is the safest place for it, and the materials therein do better with sky on three sides. This is the part of the library where you are most likely to turn a corner and find yourself on another campus, in another... country. Let's call it that. Please note, most likely, but not exclusively. Always take the north elevator to the ninth floor.

The first sub-basement is reference and course reserves. The best study carrels are down here. In fact, there are a lot of study carrels down here. More than you'd think. More than it seems there should be room for. Don't think about it. Just enjoy the fact that you can always find a quiet study space with an outlet.

The study areas in sub-basements one and two are reserved for quiet study. We ask you to respect the sanctity of the designated quiet areas. (If you are whispering to your neighbour, pick up that call on your cell phone, or just singing along to the music in your headphones under your breath, you will feel a cold hand on the back of your neck, and turn to find yourself face to face with a reproachful look from one of the night shift student pages.)
Some of your friends may have worked the day shift. Shelving in the university library on the day shift requires a combination of attention to detail, and the judgement to know when to when to bring a situation to the attention of the library staff, and when it is best to look away and hope the vending machine gives you iron washers on your next coffee break. Applications for pages may be submitted at the circulation desk, and will be kept on file for six to eight months. In most cases, wages will be processed through university payroll, though some exceptions will be made on a case by case basis.

There isn’t a lot of turnover on the night shift, although every semester you will notice one or two new faces. The fashion sense of the night shift pages is always at least a little bit out date, and tends towards vintage. Many of them have been shelving in the library for a long, long, time, and their accuracy and speed is unparalleled.

You will get used to the noiseless ringing in your ears in the study areas in the second sub-basement. We advise ascending and descending the stairs between the first and second levels slowly, to allow yourself time to acclimatize.

It’s best to go in with the call number of the book you need written on the back of your hand in mirror writing if it’s in storage in the second sub-basement. Use a green pen. Take the stairs to get there. Knock three times before you open the door, take three steps forward, close your eyes, and say the title of the book three times with your hand outstretched. When the book is placed in your hand, you must say, I have found what I am searching. For the love of all you hold dear, do not say thank you. You can open your eyes now, but turn to the left and take the elevator back up instead of the stairs. Don't look behind you, no matter who you hear, and what you think you feel breathing on the back of your neck.

The third sub-basement is a staff-only area. Bibliographic services is in the third sub-basement. Do not disturb the cataloguers.

Please note that librarians comprise a relatively small proportion of the library staff. Named staff include support staff, student pages, and paraprofessional staff. They will be identified by both title and name of choice on their library-issued name tags. As with all university nametags, pronouns can be found in the lower right corner. If you wish, you may refer to library techs and other paraprofessional staff by title instead of name as a matter of professional courtesy.

Librarians are to be referred to by their respective job titles, which can be found on their library-issued name tag, business card, office door, and though you will never see it, recorded in the arcane scrolls of HR upon the point of surrender of their name. A current listing of assigned subject specialist liaison librarians for each department can be found posted on the library website, at the reference desk, and inside the rings of the oldest oak tree in the rooftop courtyard.

We appreciate your consideration, and look forward to seeing you in the library throughout your academic career.
Appendix A: About The Librarians

Chapter Summary

If the Library needs you, it will take you. If you are lucky, it will be on your terms, at a time of your choosing. In most cases, a masters' degree in library and information sciences from a nationally-certified graduate program is required, though in some rare cases, an equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered.

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I Know Too Much about how libraries and librarians work. This resulted in complicated headcanons about job roles and org charts, trying to figure out how the behind-the-scenes of all the accumulating bits of canon and fanon would work.

Libraries contain vast amounts of information that create possibilities, and stories, that have an immense amount of narrative weight and power. They are basically one giant liminal space, but one that exists for the people that use it. And it's the people that work in the library that create that connection.

The Fair Folk have opinions about librarians. There's a certain amount of idealism involved that would make them vulnerable, but so much of what they know and do is dangerous. They are accorded a certain not-inconsiderable amount of respect and caution, let's say, and leave it at that.

There are two kinds of librarians at Elsewhere University, two sides to the same coin. There are the librarians who have an employee ID number, and a title on their nametag. They have lunch breaks, vacation time, and salt and iron in their pockets and stashed in odd corners in their desk drawers and offices, just like the rest of the staff and faculty. And then there are The Other Librarians. The other librarians can be found on floors ten through twenty-three. Officially, there are nine floors to the library. (This does not include the rooftop garden that is not accessible by stairwell or elevator.) The sub-basements are officially recognized. The tunnels are not.

The other librarians also have officially-issued library nametags. All they say is "librarian." Some of the other librarians may have been human once. They may have officially retired. They may have learned too much, or willingly given up something that held them tethered to mundane cares outside of The Library, or made a bargain for something the library needed.

There are stories of a cataloguer, best of his generation, who reached a point where he could recite chapter and verse of the standards, never misjudged a subject heading or used the wrong cutter number. The arcanest of arcane inscriptions held still for him while he captured the true author and all relevant cross-references. There was not a text he could not read, or element of bibliographic control that he could not master. The years went by, and the standards changed, Anglo American Cataloging Rules superceded the Rules for Descriptive Cataloging, ISBNS were introduced, AACR became AACR2, and a switch from cards to computer records loomed large. He knew so much, but was afraid so little of it would still be relevant. He made a deal.
He wasn't the first. There are still cards appearing in the card catalogue today written in copperplate Library Hand script, as proscribed by Melville Dewey, with a pen and an inkwell.

There are still memories on the lower floors of a reference librarian who could find anything. There are people on staff who worked side-by-side with her on late night reference desk shifts, and tell stories of how she had an infinite command of Boolean logic to wring every penny out of the paid-by-the-second online search services. There was not an annotated bibliography or index that she didn't have at her fingertips, and she could walk a student through the reference interview from "I need a book, I guess" to "help me find three print sources for my introduction to pre-confederate Canadian literature mid-term paper" in twenty seconds with a smile. Rumour has it that she bargained away the memory of every childhood pet she ever had to get internet access in the library for undergraduates. Officially, she retired in the late nineties. But in the Deep Library, there are those who can coax the dial-up modem into connecting to a Dialog subscription that the university hasn't paid for in two decades, and bring back an answer in seconds every time.

There are fading echoes of the year that the entire cataloguing department and half the reference librarians vanished in the stacks in the early 1940's. The university was smaller then, and the protections that were needed to balance a tumultuous time in world history took a terrible toll. It was said that if you stood in certain parts of the stacks, you could hear the air raid sirens, and watch the collection grow as refugee books were taken in. There were dark whispers that some of the staff disappeared into the library in a trade for safety for family members or one of the other desperate bargains made in wartime, but some were promoted to the upper floors without warning because the library didn't want to lose their valuable talents to conscription or worse.

If the Library needs you, it will take you. If you are lucky, it will be on your terms, at a time of your choosing. In most cases, a masters' degree in library and information sciences from a nationally-certified graduate program is required, though in some rare cases, an equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered.

Most undergraduates and visitors (both the mundane kind that come from outside the campus, and the Visitors), and some university support staff, will leave with a vague impression of any of the librarians as an ominous yet helpful shape, and an overwhelming sense of sameness. This is a type of protective camouflage that the library generates, and it extends to cover all the librarians, the one that leave at the end of the day, and the ones that do not. They cannot all be the same. It is, of course, impossible to run a library without a wide and varied pool of skill sets and personalities, all of which contribute to the, shall we say, unique personalities, egos, interdepartmental rivalries, feuds, and alliances that are the lifeblood of an academic library.

This protection waxes and wanes depending on the year. During the spring and summer semesters following the Chemistry Majors' Revolt, anyone remotely associated with any of the science departments would find themselves on the doorstep of the library with a ringing in their ears like the sudden absence of a loud noise, holding the books or other information they'd gone to the library to find, with no memory of how it got there. An entire spring-semester introductory chemistry class knows the structure of an APA-style bibliography inside and out, but could not tell you when or where they learned it.

In more recent times, sufficiently motivated undergrads, graduate students, and faculty will have little trouble differentiating one librarian from another, if they are on floors one through nine. (They must, of course, be referred to by job title as they do not have names.)

There are operational needs that must be met. It's hard to plead your case as to why the library really should keep that critical music theory database for your graduate level seminar course that currently costs as much as all of the journal subscriptions for the art history department combined
when you're not sure if you're talking to the subject liaison librarian for fine arts, the head of interlibrary loans, or an eldritch creature with no face but a really excellent recall for geopolitical boundaries in medieval Africa, and a working knowledge of twelve dead languages, seven of which were never spoken by a human tongue.

(Interlibrary Loans and Fine Arts--the subject librarian, not the department--have been in the midst of a prolonged feud for the past decade over a hiring committee disagreement regarding practicum student placements and a botched exorcism. It is rivalled only by the cold war between Interlibrary Loans and Cataloguing over supply budgets that's been running since the late nineties. Confusing one for the other would be unhelpful, to say the least.)

The Other Librarians generally do not encroach on their colleagues' responsibilities. They are still librarians with all of the professional ethics that entails, and are generally orderly and rule-abiding, unless a fundamental principle of librarianship is at risk. (Do not speak of internet filtering within the library walls if you wish to leave with all of your fingers intact.) The Deep Library should be approached with utmost caution, regardless. Some people in the profession say, your library should have something in it to offend everyone. EU's library would agree to that statement, with some extensive additions, explanatory footnotes, and cautionary appendices. Respect the Library.
Part Two: Staff Handbook - General Introduction

Chapter Summary

There are numerous challenges to working in a university library. Shrinking budgets, rising costs, proprietary and predatory database licenses for peer-reviewed content, entitled faculty, clueless undergraduates, and inappropriate behaviour in the stacks. Predatory shadow creatures, migrating stacks leading to misplaced range markers on the shelves in the Deep Library, time management issues, and the inevitable workplace frustrations of whose turn it is to clean out the staff room fridge, and how come the same three people are the only ones to sign up for the weekly search party rota out into the Deep Library stacks?

Chapter Notes

Public libraries are my jam, but I know enough academic library types and hear enough odds and ends of workplace gossip to make an educated approximation. Any factual errors of day-to-day inner workings might be my mistake--or, maybe there are other powers at work...

ia) The official staff handbook (with some additions and annotations)

The library has an elaborate structure of treaties, truces, contracts, curses, oaths, prophecies and traditions that stretch back to the university's founding, and in some cases even earlier. Union negotiations for library staff include clauses that are non-standard by every sense of the word. A minimum of seven different collective agreements apply to various library staff groups:

- Librarians are tenured faculty, and fall under the auspices of the Faculty Association.
- The Non-Academic Staff Association's collective agreement covers the rest of the staff.
- The treaty with the Court of the King of the Cats is negotiated in partnership with Facility Services.
- Facility Services has their own binding contract with specific chapter and verse relating to library services. Groundskeeping is a sub-local of Facility Services.
- A spoken agreement never to be captured in the written word governs the rooftop and all that dwell there.
- There is at least one more that is never spoken of outside of the eighth floor.

Librarians (Masters' degree from a nationally accredited program) are tenured faculty. Library technicians (two-year college diploma) are not. In many institutions, this is cause for bad blood. At EU, it is relatively unremarked upon. Everyone knows that The Library will take a tech on occasion, as well. (An equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered under some circumstances.) Besides, librarians get hazard pay for additional job duties as required, but somebody needs to keep their feet on the ground and make sure that the new pages all get workplace health and safety orientation, that the schedule for library instruction class spots goes out to all departments in time and that the sign-up deadlines are enforced, that each service point
has enough petty cash, salt packets, and emergency iron bolts and washers, and that there's a back-up person to tell the bees in the rooftop garden any important goings-on in case of sick leave or conflicting vacation time.

A bachelor's degree or other related post-secondary education is an asset but not required for library assistants or other specialist positions. Specialist positions include diviner, beekeeper, and marketing and media manager. Library-wide training coordinator, departmental exorcist, and occupational health and safety committee chair are all additional job duties that may be taken on by a qualified staff member in a senior position.

Library staff may serve on interdepartmental and campus-wide committees such as the ethics review board and any resulting subcommittees, grievance committee, campus-wide events and initiatives, and the bargain, geas, curse, and wager review board.

Interlibrary teams and committees include the missing persons search party rota, library-wide policy committee, training and professional development team, and Deep Library liaison team.

Other library committees and workgroups include the circulation policy committee, digital resource committee, open access textbook working group, and curse and hex disarming team. The Honourable Order of Bibliographic Cartography and Strange Space Spelunking operates in spring and summer semesters outside of peak semester workloads.

The Library does not have a formal dress code per se. Business casual attire is preferred for public-facing positions. Iron accessories in moderation are strongly recommended for all staff, although some exceptions may be made on a case by case basis. Staff are encouraged to take advantage of the arrangement negotiated between the Library and the metalwork shop to test the iron content of any protective jewelry, wards, or other personal items obtained through unofficial channels.

Departmental staff meetings are generally held bimonthly, at the discretion of the department manager. Library-wide staff meetings are held quarterly, at the end of each semester. All library meeting start times are based upon the clock in the room in which the meeting is scheduled.

The muster point when the evacuation plan goes into effect is the bloodstone circle in the west corner of the Commons. This is the only time when it is safe to use the crosswalks in front of the library. The muster point when the shelter-in-place plan goes into effect is the brass fountain on floor twelve and half. Turn around and take the first left turn you see.

Seeking the thirteenth floor is grounds for disciplinary action.

All new staff must complete the instructional videos and/or related worksheets on the following topics within one week of their official start date:

- Library mission values, and core principles
- Evacuation and shelter-in-place procedures
- Ergonomic workstation adjustment
- Card catalogue safety and containment
- Library navigation and wayfinding
- Timesheet reporting in a chronologically challenged workplace
- Salt lines and thresholds - when to call facility services and when to run

ii) The unofficial staff handbook (Kept in the green binder in the staff room, and revised as needed. Has been known to update itself on numerous occasions)

There are numerous challenges to working in a university library. Shrinking budgets, rising costs,
proprietary and predatory database licenses for peer-reviewed content, entitled faculty, clueless undergraduates, and inappropriate behaviour in the stacks. Predatory shadow creatures, migrating stacks leading to misplaced range markers on the shelves in the Deep Library, time management issues, and the inevitable workplace frustrations of whose turn it is to clean out the staff room fridge, and how come the same three people are the only ones to sign up for the weekly search party rota out into the Deep Library stacks? (Those last two have been taken care of by establishing a set schedule for fridge cleaning by department, and by handing the search party organization off to the manager with the best scheduling mojo. If you do not volunteer, you will be voluntold.)

Here are some helpful hints and tips from your coworkers:

There are communal cartons of cream and milk in the staff room fridge. If you use them, it is appreciated if you contribute to the cream fund in the owl mug on top of the microwave. Do not use the staff room cream and milk to fill the saucers outside the second floor quiet study rooms at the end of the night, or the saucer of milk for the seventh floor shelving art. (It's arguably all the same cream, but there are a couple of people who get cranky about it because Reference Services has a separate jug of cream paid for out of their departmental supply budget for this purpose.) And don't forget to put your quarters in the owl mug before the first of the month.

The north elevator is the slow one. The east stairwell is a prime make-out location for undergrads that we are actively trying to discourage. Barge in often, and loudly. The west staircase literally leads to nowhere. Don't take the west stairs. (It's a proven fact that one out of every three libraries has stairway to nowhere. Nine out of every ten libraries have multiple leaks in the roof.)

Elevators and stairs often do not connect in the ways you would expect them to. Breadcrumb trails do not work. Bagel crumb trails are unreliable. Donut crumb trails will get you back the way you came, but will irk facility services. Don't upset the janitorial staff. The time spent coaxing them out of the gloomy mood this will cause, and the cost in bringing in cupcakes for them all for the next week is something that the senior manager of administrative services will never get back. Don't be the cause of that. The senior manager of administrative services controls the departmental supply budgets, among other things.

Don't try to find the thirteenth floor. This is posted on the staff room notice board, in the orientation manual, written into library-wide policy, and part of the quarterly reminders at the beginning of each library wide staff meeting.

Don't mess with the seventh floor, either. The second sub-basement is a bit risky. Floors ten through twenty-three may not officially exist, but can be navigated with caution.

Be cautious about accepting help from anyone not wearing a library-issued name tag.

Watch out for Mildred-and-Ethel in the stacks. Mildred-and-Ethel look like twins. They look like every stereotype or caricature of a librarian out there, the prim elderly lady with a bun, wearing pearls and cardigan. They look kind and harmless. They are none of those things. The first two times you accept their help, you'll find what you're looking for in no time. Don't accept a third time. If you're lucky, you'll be left with a scorch mark on the floor, and the indelible memory of a ravenous hunger and a truly improbable amount of teeth. If you're not lucky, you won't remember anything ever again.

Any library staff foolish enough to get caught hanging around the mysterious staircase behind the library during the first night of the full moon will find themselves in danger of formal disciplinary notice, and assigned some required reading by Christina Rosetti.

If you find three stacked pennies on a shelf in the stacks, leave them and proceed with caution. If
you need them, you'll know.

If you are in the stacks, and a child's ball rolls towards you, send it back the way it came. Don't follow it. If a wasp's nest rolls towards you, evacuate the floor immediately and report to the senior staff member on duty. Someone must tell the bees.

An empty circle of chairs in the group study rooms is safe to rearrange. An empty circle of chairs in either sub-basement is not.

Library staff don't eat the baked goods from the coffee shop in the foyer if they can help it. They're not dangerous, just stale. (Time passes differently in the library.)
Part Two: Staff Handbook - Circulation Services

Chapter Summary

As everyone in the department will tell you, Circ is the life-blood of the library, and keeps material flowing through its vast and beating heart. The Library would grind to a stagnant and useless standstill without the Circulation Department.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Pages fall under the jurisdiction of Circulation Services, the most concrete and visible department in the library. Most student pages work the day shift, and are paid an hourly rate by Campus Services's payroll. They are part of the non-academic staff union, with all the protections that entails. There are some work experience placements where hours worked may be traded for course credit, for favours, for knowledge, or as part of the payment of a geas, curse, wager, or other obligation. Work experience students are not paid an hourly rate, and will be limited to supervised shelf-reading on floors three to six, and pre-sorting the shelving carts.

Applications for student positions can be dropped off with the administrative assistant on the eighth floor (getting safely to the eighth floor and back again is considered to be the first part of the application process), submitted electronically through the library's website (navigating the deepest corners of the library website and emerging without losing small fragments of your short term memory and forgetting what you were there for is considered to be an alternate first step to visiting the eighth floor), or delivered to the bees in the rooftop garden by whatever means necessary. Kindly note that carrier pigeons do not fare well. Students enrolled in undergraduate library science courses, or with prior library experience, may be considered for part-time term circulation clerk positions.

Day shift student pages are always sent out in pairs, and will sign in and out together at the beginning of each shift. They are expected to wear closed-toed shoes, and fill their pockets full of salt packets and library-issued paperclips before leaving the circulation workroom. Most of the shelving carts are steel, and like all shelving carts in libraries everywhere, tend to have a mind of their own that can only sometimes be attributed to the one wheel that won't stay straight. The carts have their share of dents, scratches, and mysterious arcane markings that may or may not be graffiti. If your shelving cart locks up and refuses to turn down a particular aisle, or through a certain doorway, pay attention.

For safety reasons and to promote a culture of professionalism and public service in the library, headphones are not to be worn in public areas. While working in back rooms and offices, headphones worn in one ear may be permitted. However, if you find yourself using your headphones to block out unsettling noises in your general vicinity, consider contacting a supervisor or other senior staff member on shift to report the disturbance. We are all responsible for maintaining a healthy and safe workplace. If the oozing signs of the great ichor beast infestation of 2003 had been caught sooner, the third-floor carpet may not have needed to be replaced quite so soon.

Day pages are encouraged not to wear non-medical adaptive lenses while working. There are some
things in the library that it is safer not to see. Night pages have already seen it all.

Night shift pages shelve throughout the library. Officially, this covers floors one to six, sub-basements one and two, and special collections including the ninth floor. Unofficially, the books on floors ten through twenty-three also need attention. An accurate system may yet be devised for self-shelving books, but it would not be a very safe system. The pages keep order by walking the boundaries as much as by putting the books back in the proper spot.

None of the student pages are ever assigned to shelve on the seventh floor. Instead, the seniormost person working in the circ department is tasked each night with taking up the full shelving cart and leaving it outside the elevator with exactly two-thirds of a cup of the real coffee cream from the staff fridge, always in a ceramic mug, a shot of Bailey's in a saucer, and whatever button B9 on the vending machine by the fourth-floor study carrels has chosen to dispense. Often, it's a chocolate bar with a wrapper in a language that you swear you used to know. Other times, fresh flowers that are just as familiar and maddeningly undefined and unnamed, sealed in a 750 ml pop bottle. One night last winter, it was a small jade carving of a salamander. In the morning, the empty cart is always waiting in the exact centre of the elevator.

The cart for the seventh floor is one of the only remaining wooden shelving carts in the library. (There is one more down in Bibliographic Services with the cataloguers, and a third up in Special Collections.) Most days, this is unremarkable, but there was one morning last spring when the morning circ staff opened the elevator to find that the seventh floor cart had sprouted into small branches, bearing tiny white flowers that smelled like a cross between hawthorn and lilac. By sunset, the twigs had grown brittle, and the floor was littered with petals, and by closing, all traces were gone, except for the sprig that still sits on the Circulation Manager's desk. She keeps it in an old-fashioned ink bottle, inherited from her predecessor, and the branch has started to put out small tendrils and shoots. Eventually, it will be transplanted to the rooftop garden. There is a reason for all of this, but it is not a secret that can be shared.

The Circulation Manager (commonly known as Circulation) oversees the circulation desk and staff responsible for check in and check out, the pages, membership services including fees and fines, co-ordinates wards and security for main-floor entrances and exits with building maintenance, ensures the borders are patrolled, an efficient and effective workflow of materials is upheld throughout the library, and a high standard of customer service is maintained by her staff throughout the library.

She has conversations with freshman pages about appropriate footwear (it's admirable when those who have come back... different still show up for their scheduled shift, but barefoot is not acceptable for safety reasons while working), ensures to the best of her considerable abilities that no-one loses their arm in the book drop abyss, comes in after-hours several times a semester to arrange staff meetings by seance for the night pages, and co-ordinates and heads up the search parties into the Deep Library on a regular schedule that is posted by the photocopiers and study room sign-up sheets.

She wears a chain of linked paperclips wrapped twelve times around each wrist. It looks whimsical. The paperclips look like everyday cheap steel wire. It is neither of these things. One wrist is iron, and the other is silver. The number of paperclips vary. Rumour has it when she was on the bargaining team during the last round of union contract negotiations, at the end of it all she'd gained a handful of coloured paperclips on the right (iron) wrist, and the number of silver paperclips had dipped by half. But the negotiations didn't go to arbitration, and the library didn't lose any staff--none of the day pages have vanished en route to their shift between the dorms and the library since.
She values efficient workflows and common sense, good customer service, strong coffee, the protective power of an iron-tipped javelin of indeterminate origin that's stashed behind her office door, and keeping all beverages in containers with a lid while working at the circ desk. There are rumours that she has eyes in the back of her head. (She doesn't. She just borrows other sets of eyes as needed.)

The library diviner has foreseen that there will come a day of sacrifice where, gaunt-faced and battle-worn, she will be down to a single chain of paper clips around each wrist, facing down an unseen foe with a broken javelin--or there will not.

There are three senior staff (one library tech, two full-time clerks), nine part-time clerks on the desk, and nine in the back. The pool of student pages is a shifting total.

The library tech in circulation is responsible for the scheduling, for training the pages, updating policies and procedures, acting as shift supervisor, arbitrator and sentinel as needed, and ordering supplies. He's a relatively new grad, and is still getting used to the ins and outs of the job and the library. He's braver and more resourceful than he thinks he is. Last Sunday shift, he broke up two make-out sessions, called Campus Security to deal with a third incident that had gone rather further than making out, and informed a large, wet black horse that was dripping on the marble floor in the foyer that offering rides to students is considered to be soliciting goods and/or services and prohibited by library policy.

Circulation staff in the back process returned items that arrive through the book drops, intercampus mail, and dropped off on the library doorstep in the dead of night in a padlocked trunk or in a wicker basket swaddled in blankets embroidered in a script that twists and writhes when you try to read it. There is a whole new level of blasé to odd-things-found-in-books when a bacon bookmark is positively mundane, and some of the more archaic items may actually take off a finger. Safe work practices on material handling, ergonomic workstation adjustment, and rudimentary cursebreaking are part of the core training for the position.

Circ staff need to be fast, efficient, detail-oriented, and have the focus to not be lulled into a false sense of complacency by often-routine work. A logical mind with just the right sort of twists, and you can untangle the oddest errors in the circulation records. Enough experience, and you can tell when something's off with a book just by the feel of it in your hands, whether it's the subtle swell of water-damaged pages, or the lingering pins and needles of a forbidden tome returned without its library-issued protective envelope from special collections.

The main book drop has affectionately been nicknamed the abyss, partly due to its often-unending nature, and partly because of the strange treasures that will surface from its depths on occasion. Crumbling manuscripts and scrolls with no library markings appear regularly, as do engraved stone tablets, elaborately beaded woven cords, and silk fans. Pre-Cambrian fossils appear to be in vogue this fall, dropping in with the overdue reserve material at a rate of two or three a day. Items such as these that are returned in error from other libraries are placed on a reserve shelf waiting to be claimed for a period of no less than one lunar month before being moved to the lost and found.

The self-checks are temperamental. There are rumors that they've developed artificial intelligence and are conspiring to recruit the photocopiers next. It will still take one of the clerks on the circ desk, however, to troubleshoot your missing book that you swear you returned (shelf checks for claims-returned items are entrusted to the night pages) and waive your overdue fines (temporal shifts are mapped at the beginning of each semester, but have been known to ebb and flow, often in correlation with the phantom trains' unfathomable schedules), figure out why your card and PIN won't let you into the aggregated database searches for journal articles (often the price is too high to be paid for database licenses).
The circulation desk staff are the keepers of the Lost and Found. There is always the mundane detritus of water bottles and mittens, forgotten notebooks, and iron washers plaited into lanyards for the campus rec centre. Sometimes, there are more arcane items. This week’s finds include: a small linen bag stitched in red thread, full of yellowed bird bones and a smooth, round river rock; a perfect replica of an original NES Gameboy, carved in petrified wood; a string of twenty-seven broken mood rings, hung on a leather cord; and two kilograms of an unidentified substance that looked like marijuana but smelled like raspberries, which was turned over to campus security for further investigation.

There is always a stash of plastic beads in one of the drawers at the circ desk, along with a mixed handful of coins and dried leaves, keys to several filing cabinets and doors that no longer exist, another labelled key that will actually open a door that doesn't exist, date-due stamps that continue to appear like talismans though the library hasn't used paper cards and stamps for sign-outs since the late eighties, and the one little-used lower filing cabinet drawer that is sometimes full of handwritten overdue notices from seventy years ago, sometimes opens on a swirling, screaming void, and occasionally contains green moss, mushrooms, and a faint bioluminescent glow. Don't eat the mushrooms--they're a protected variety making a slow comeback from the brink of extinction. Don't drop things into the screaming void--that's just inconsiderate.

The circ clerks need to be fast, accurate, have a head for multiple policies and procedures, the good judgement to know when to follow the rules, and when to bend them. They need to know when to turn a blind eye to the seven-foot thorn-crowned figure frowning at the book return, and when a faint whisper behind them while unjamming the photocopier is cause to whip out the emergency salt box from behind the desk.

As everyone in the department will tell you, Circ is the life-blood of the library, and keeps material flowing through its vast and beating heart. The Library would grind to a stagnant and useless standstill without the Circulation Department.

Chapter End Notes

Somewhere along the way, this has turned into a love letter to libraries and the people who work in them.

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