

Librarians are Living Bookmarks

“You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men...” (2 Corinthians 3:2 NASU)

A student goes to the library to say goodbye; they are graduating – they just wanted to say thank you for helping them pass their courses. This scene is repeated annually in libraries of all types, all over. They go on to success; look at their degree on the wall or promotion and flash back to the time in school when the librarian helped with their failing course so they could pass and graduate. They put a mental bookmark in the important chapter in their life of, pass or fail, or make it or break it, give up or go on, and that bookmarker is you, the librarian who helped them at that crossroads of their life to success. They are now at a point in their success because of you, the librarian hidden behind the circulation or reference desk who smiled and said, “How can I help you today?”

A bookmark can be defined as a strip of cardboard or other material used to mark one’s place in a book. It is something that takes us back to a helpful, frequently needed, or favorite spot, without interference or delay. Librarians are like living bookmarks in student’s lives; they hold a place in an important chapter of their life that enabled them to move forward to the end of their education and on to higher successes. Bookmarks are often overlooked, not thought about, but rather used. If a bookmark is misplaced or falls out, then they are searched for. Such is the librarian, holding an important place in the student’s life: sometimes overlooked, but if you are not there in the library, they miss you.

Besides being bookmarkers, librarians also write their knowledge, wisdom, and counsel into the lives of students, like Paul wrote into the lives of those in Corinth. As the Corinthians became Paul’s living letters of what he accomplished in their lives (2 Corinthians 3:1-3), so do librarians mark a page in every student’s life and write wisdom into the hearts of the patrons they serve. In the 25 years I have served as a librarian, I have counselled; taught; helped with research; forgave fines; repaired personal books; helped with power points and papers; explained databases; prayed for and with students; paid for housing, transportation, medicines, and meals; and babysat kids in the library while mom was in class. The list is familiar to us all, and it goes on. Not all come back and say thank you.

So, to all the librarians out there who feel undervalued, unimportant, overlooked, not appreciated, or unloved – smile big because you are somebody’s living bookmark in their life, marking the point of pass or fail, make or break, give up or go on. You have written into their lives your wisdom and knowledge. They now look at their degree on the wall and promotion letter and think of you, their living bookmark, who wrote into their life.



—Artis Lovelady

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