

The Best Thing About My Library Is...

The best thing about my library is the books. The library could be a tent out in the middle of the desert and as long as it had books I'd be happy. I know the kids are hooked on the computers, and computers are just fine, but you'll never find in a computer what you will find in a book. You can't, you just can't curl up with a good computer. I haven't tried to, but somehow I know I'm right about this.

In the last few years I've traveled around San Diego quite a bit, and the library was what got me through. When I was in City Heights they had a great collection of books. The book that affected my life the most at the time was "Education of a Wandering Man," by Louis L'Amour. You know the guy who wrote the Sacketts and Hondo and all those other great westerns. Well, this one was a little different, a kind of a biblio-memoir. He told about his early travels and all the books he'd come across such as "Martin Eden," by Jack London, and how they changed his life. Well, a few years later I came across a copy of "Education" at the Imperial Beach Library and reread it and then found a collection of London's books, among them "Martin Eden," which really is a fantastic novel. Then I read "People of the Abyss" where London went undercover in turn-of-the-century London so he could describe the horrible living conditions. A kind of "reality show" book. I mentioned these books to a friend and he just wrote London off as "that Call of the Wild guy," which is understandable but unfortunate. While in City Heights I also visited the North Park Library which really blew me away. I mean they had "200 Days of Sodom," by the Marquis de Sade. I mean you don't find books like that just anywhere. I'm not recommending it per se, but it's the obscurity of it, the history of it that excites me. I was exploring shelves in the Coronado Library once and came across "I, Billy Shakespeare," by William Peter Blatty. I mean, most people know him for "The Exorcist," if anything, but he wrote a whole slew of light novels before hitting the jackpot.

Now maybe someday there won't be libraries as we think of libraries. Maybe they'll be on-line and we'll just log in and go through a massive card catalogue and order whatever and have it shipped to our homes. And that would be all right. Then the library would become more an idea than a place, but even if such a revolutionary incarnation should take place, I will still love and appreciate my library and the people who keep it running efficiently. And of course, all those books.