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Publisher Profile -- Southwest Regional Library

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ATG: How did a young librarian/romance writer from the Rocky Mountain West make her way to Durham, NC?

JL: Via a long, indirect route. I met my ex-husband in college in Chicago, and he came down to Durham for graduate school at UNC. When I moved back to the United States from Shanghai, I came to Durham and eventually went to library school.

ATG: We didn't know that you had spent time in Shanghai. That must have been a great experience. What took you to Shanghai?

JL: I went to Shanghai because I didn't know what I wanted to do after college. I'd graduated with a degree in economics, which is a practical degree, but I wasn't interested in the typical jobs for econ majors. I taught conversational English at the **Shanghai International Studies University** in their continuing education program. It was a wonderful experience, and Shanghai is a wonderful city. I have fond memories of the city, the people, and the food. I'm glad I went.

ATG: You were honored by the *Romance Writers of America* and named *Librarian of the Year in 2010*. Can you tell us about that?

JL: It was such a surprise and an honor! I had just started doing romance programming (a couple romance teas, along with inviting **Sarah Wendell** of *Smart Bitches, Trashy Books* to speak), so after I got it, I felt I really had to live up to the award, and I've done even more programming around the romance genre since. The prize is a free trip to the conference, and **RWA** treats you like a queen. You get picked up in a town car, and **Debbie Macomber** sends you flowers. All the publishers invite you to their cocktail parties, and every author you meet loves libraries. I made a lot of good connections at the conference and met some very dear people, many of whom I've invited to speak at **Durham County Library**.

ATG: You've written four novels so far. Any more on the drawing board?

JL: The life of a genre author means you're always working on the next book. I've just started plotting out book five, building character descriptions, doing my research, etc. I've got plans for another series and another stand-alone. What gets written after book five depends on what I can sell to **Harlequin** and what I want to do on my own.

ATG: How do you juggle the responsibilities of being a full-time librarian and a successful genre author? When do you find the time to think about the next novel, let alone to write it?

JL: I get up at 5:30 in the morning and write for at least an hour. I usually also write for an hour at night. One of the advantages of a public librarian's schedule is that I work weekends, meaning I have a day off in the middle of the week. It's harder to find the time to write on my free weekends, but those Wednesdays off are treasured writing times.

against the grain library profile

Southwest Regional Library

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Durham County Library, Main Library

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BACKGROUND/HISTORY: **Southwest Regional Library** is reopened after renovation three years ago. It had been a very busy, very small location. It is now triple the size and a very busy, larger location.

STAFF: 162 **EMPLOYEES:** 135 FTEs. **BUDGET:** 9.2 million

TYPES OF MATERIALS YOU BUY: We buy eBooks through **Overdrive**, books, audiobooks, CDs, magazines, and DVDs. We also subscribe to many databases, both through the library individually and through North Carolina's resource, *nclive.org*.

USE OF MOBILE TECHNOLOGY: We do have eBooks through **Overdrive** for people to check out on their devices and use the Library Anywhere app. It's not exactly a mobile technology, but we have this fabulous Website, *isthelibraryopen.com* (this was an idea of our Board of Trustees, I think) that makes finding out hours so, so simple. You should check that out.

WHERE I SEE THE LIBRARY IN FIVE YEARS: System-wide, the Main Library will be under renovation or nearing renovation by then. That will be a big improvement for the downtown area of Durham and for services to the population around Main. I used to work at the downtown branch, and I can't wait for that to happen. Also, as a system, we will be exploring more mobile technologies and ways to reach our patrons where they are, not just in the buildings. Durham County just finished their strategic plan and the library is working on ours based off of that one, so anything more specific should wait until the strategic plan is completed.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS OF INTEREST TO ATG READERS: Durham is a wonderful place to be a librarian. The local population is so supportive of their library system, and I have wonderful colleagues. There are really great things happening in the **Durham County Library** system, including "First Library in Space" (<http://firstlibraryinspace.org/>), the Durham Comics Project (<http://durhamcomicsproject.org/>), and other inventive, innovative programs for our community. 🌱

Thinking about my next novel happens all the time. Running and taking my dog for a walk are prime thinking times, because I think best about the next book when my mind is allowed to wander as I'm engaged in something else. I'm always on the lookout for the next idea and keep little notes of the little triggers.

ATG: Do you have any words of wisdom for those librarians who share the dream of becoming a published author?

JL: Finishing the book was the big hurdle for me. I really had to develop the discipline to sit and work every day. Writing is 99% butt-in-chair and only 1% muse. Also, join a local writing group; you'll learn so much. I'm lucky because the **Romance Writers of America** is the most professional, supportive, and with-it writing organization out there, but you will get good information from all of them. It seems silly to say to a bunch of librarians, but reading is so important. Read in the genre you want to write in to get a feel for expectations, and read in other genres to get ideas on how to play and expand on

expectations (while still meeting them). **Bob Mayer** advises people to read big authors' debut novels (the books that sold on merit alone) and breakout novels (the books where the author went from good to a great seller), and see what it was about those books that worked. And then write, because no matter how much you read, the words don't get on the page until you put them there.

ATG: Thanks Jennifer. This has been fun. We've really enjoyed talking to you and we're glad the auction was a success.

JL: Thank you! I enjoyed answering your questions. Usually I'm either wearing my librarian hat or my author one, so it was fun to wear both at once. 🌱