Books Are Us

Anne Robichaux
Medical University of South Carolina, awkr772@charleston.net

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The parlor of the inn also has floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, and books abound on nearly every surface and in every guest room. The whole description depicted Cottlefield House as an appealing place, especially to bibliophiles, though Berni initially made a reservation to go there please his girl friend, a lover of “all things English.”

Then, of course, the novel turns dark, not the least reason being a snowstorm that strands all the guests and staff at the inn. The library is also dark, when Berni sets out at night to find the rare copy of The Big Sleep. He hears furtive whispering coming from the library, his plans are foiled, he retreats to his room, and the next morning, a nod to Agatha Christie (Berni as Hercule Poirot)? Berni is quite a likeable character (in spite of one of his more dubious professions) and I plan to read more of the Burglar series by Block.

Check out http://www.lawrenceblock.com for an entertaining Website and to learn more about the author. On a quite different level, a couple of years ago I was introduced to Arthur through a memory card game by two of our grand-children, and learned more recently that a television show of the same name is broadcast on ETV. For those who aren’t familiar with the show, Arthur’s last name is “Read” and the show, among other things, emphasizes the pleasures of reading to children. The one show I watched had characters reading books, and ended (as many PBS shows do) with the suggestion that more stories like these can be found at the local public library, the difference being that an animated library was depicted at the end of the show!

On a recent trip to Reno to visit the just mentioned kids, we discovered one of the Arthur books, D.W. Library Card by Marc Brown (Little, Brown and Company, 2001, ISBN 0-316-73820-4 paperback). Given the title, I had to read it, and was immediately pleased to note that the book is dedicated to a “very special librarian.” I learned that D.W. is Arthur’s younger sister, and she has her eye on a frog book in the library. Arthur won’t check it out for her (he doesn’t want “baby” books on his record), so she needs to get her own library card. The librarian tells her she has to be able to write her full name in order to get a card. This news upsets D.W. since she can hardly say her full name (Dora Winifred Read), much less write it. Of course she eventually learns to write her name, even practicing one evening in mashed potatoes! D.W. is thrilled to finally get her own card, only to learn the book she wants is checked out and she has to wait for it. (This story didn’t include the joys of randomly searching shelves and picking out other possibly interesting books!) When the book is returned and she is finally able to check it out, she is told (not by the librarian but by the boy who returned it) that she has to treat the book very carefully, because “they take away your library card forever” if you hurt a library book!

Thus she is afraid to even touch the book, much less read it, until Arthur comes to her rescue. D.W. enjoys the book so much, she is sad when its time to return it, until she learns about the practice of “renewing.” This book has wonderful illustrations and is a great book to use to introduce librarians to young readers.


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So, where are we in our world of intellectual content and services? Are the security concerns significant enough to prevent librarians from using them in their libraries? Part of me wants to simply observe, it is already too late and with the advent of penny tags, tags in books may be the least thing we have to fear. The other part of me is a bit worried about the invasion of privacy issue — but with the high price of today’s tags, I don’t need to stay up at night trying to make a decision of whether to use this technology in my library.

Of one thing I am sure, investing in a company that successfully develops a low cost blocking device is probably a good idea. Maybe a bunch of us about to retire could form a small business that sells such devices at political rallies and marches. Maybe I could wholesale them to the ice cream truck and bagel/hot coffee drivers (US), BBQ chicken wings and soy milk (Asia) that always show up at such events!