



Our Bodies, Our Shelves: A Collection of Library Humor

Roz Warren

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There are eight million stories at your local public library -- and not all of them are in the books! Join humorist Roz Warren ("the world's funniest librarian") for a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at library life. What really goes on behind the circulation desk? And in the stacks? Roz, who writes for everyone from the New York Times to the Funny Times, tells all! What's the single most stolen item in any public library? What's the strangest bookmark ever left in a library book? What's the lamest excuse ever given for not returning a DVD on time? And what does your favorite librarian REALLY think of you? In twenty entertaining essays, you'll meet librarians fighting crime, partying with porn stars, coping with impossible patrons, locating hard-to-find books and saving the world. The most closely guarded library secrets will be revealed. You'll never look at your local public library the same way again!

"Hilarious!" Gina Barreca, author of *They Used To Call Me Snow White, But I Drifted*.

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From Reader Review Our Bodies, Our Shelves: A Collection of Library Humor for online ebook

Donna Cavanagh says

The word librarian conjures up images of dowdy women who lack any type of funny bone. But when you read *Our Bodies, Our Shelves*, you will understand how false this stereotype is. With this collection of stories, you see that librarians are experts in embracing humor. Roz Warren is the world's funniest librarian and she wears that moniker well. This is such a fast read but it will make you laugh out loud. Smart, funny and you will want to buy a librarian a cup of coffee when you are done reading!

Doreen McGettigan says

Four –years ago, before I became an author I was under the impression/misconception that libraries were hanging on for their dear book laden lives. I was ridiculously mistaken.

Libraries are alive and well and combined they are the largest book buyer in the world.

Another misconception I had was in thinking that librarians were plain, boring people. Boy was I wrong.

Our Bodies Our Shelves is a compilation of essays written by humor writer and librarian Roz Warren covering her observations and experiences working in a library in the affluent suburb of Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania.

While reading *Our Bodies, Our Shelves* I was extremely grateful that I never lied about or squawked about paying a fine for an overdue book. If I had I could have easily been portrayed negatively yet hilariously in one of these essays.

Some of the short essays in the book left me saying, “Oh my did this really happen, some made me smile and others had me laughing hysterically.”

The book is quite educational I learned that if you borrow a GED study guide and don't return for three –years, you can actually be arrested, if you live in Texas or several other areas. I also learned I should start to envision the tag sale and the comments from patrons to the sale after my demise and I am purging and/or adding belongings accordingly.

If you happen to know Roz and decide to visit her at the library and she acts a bit strange, be kind. She suffers from face blindness and has no idea who you are. It's a real thing.

This book for me was an enlightening, easy and delightful read.

Roberta says

I checked this book out of the library because of the title.

I don't like to include physical characteristics in a review but, if the font and spacing on the pages were normal sized, this book would probably be less than 50 pages. And "Acknowledgements" was longer than most of the chapters.

I didn't really find some of it very funny.

On page 18 the author states that she does not stereotype based on sex. She goes on and on. But when asked

to choose books to send to American troops overseas, she purposely and against advice chooses only "men's" books. Please note that women have been in the military and in combat zones for a long time. 540 female nurses were stationed in combat zones during the Korean War. More recently, according to government statistics, during the Iraq War and the Afghanistan War, more than two hundred thousand American women served, of whom 152 were killed; of those 84 were killed by enemy action. If you would like to send books to the American men and **women** in the military, there are several options including Books for Soldiers and Operation Paperback.

Then there is the chapter about the author's rainbow bracelet. The rainbow bracelets have been sold very recently (2010) but the rainbow representing LGBT pride has been around a whole lot longer than that. While her story of wearing the rainbow as a "friend of the family" is interesting, I suppose, the stories of people who wore the rainbow inadvertently between perhaps 1978 and 2000 are a whole lot funnier.

And several of the chapters had nothing to do with the Library Humor in the title. "Laughs and Looking for Love" is all quotes from another book that itself quotes from British personals ads. There is another chapter about a co-worker who once met a porn star and another chapter on empty calories.

The author explains how to steal books and advises patrons to dog-ear pages, write, hi-lite, and underline text in books. I was really tempted to reach for my pen and correct the spelling errors in this book but I haven't. Yet.

There are three of her whines that I would like to address: #1 is a whine that she uses more than once, that patrons return overdue DVDs to the shelf, then try to avoid the fine by pretending to find them claiming that the library did not check them in. Well, guess what? Libraries in my area send out an email two days before books are due. When I get email about a book that I have already returned, I go to the library, take it from the shelf and dump it in the book return. Her patrons are not "pretending" to find the DVD on the shelf. Her library did not check the DVD in properly. Whine #2 is the woman who asks them to make photocopies for her because, she claims that they do it better. The patron is right. Library staff does it better. I have lost count of the number of people who have complained that the copier is out of toner because their copies are blank only to discover that they have put the original facing up instead of against the glass. Whine #3 is the woman who comes in with a list of 10 books at 2 minutes until closing. If your door is unlocked, the library is still open. Get over it. If you can't find 10 books in 2 minutes, you had better get yourself and your library organized. We did it all the time in a library with three floors in two buildings. Maybe you're wearing the wrong shoes.

The chapter "War and Peas" where the author advises not to finish reading books that you don't enjoy, should have come last. Or, better yet, first.

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Kate says

Sadly, the funniest thing about this was the title. Sorry, Roz Warren, while this collection is okay, I wouldn't call you "the funniest librarian in America." I'm know some really funny librarians.

Nafiza says

Not as funny as you'd think. In fact, distinctly unfunny.

Sarah says

A big part of me wanted to love this collection of stories about library world SO HARD, but I just couldn't (three stars is rounding up...by about a star and a half). Warren tries desperately to come off as the "cool" librarian, but she spends most of these pages complaining about her patrons. I'm a librarian; I'm also a bookseller, and I worked for years in a call center (customer service and tech support for one of the big cell phone service providers), so I know more than most what a difficult customer looks and, more importantly, sounds like. Warren's patrons aren't difficult, she just likes to complain about them. There's a reason that the stories about the genuinely idiosyncratic patrons are repeated, sometimes with modifications (the patron with late fees hid their DVDs on the shelf then did a claimed return? Orrrr, did you mean that they did that trick, but with books? Both versions are present here; that's just one of many examples). Luckily, the font size is exceptionally large, the margins are beyond wide, and the book is less than 130 pages, so it was a very short ride down a not terribly pleasant path.

I guess it just felt like an overly-long bitchfest, and that's plain unfortunate. If you're interested in librarian humor, read *The World's Strongest Librarian*, or check out *I Work At a Public Library*.

Rebecca says

Very funny quick little read! It will definitely make you laugh and if you are a librarian working in the public sector you will definitely relate!!! This should be required reading for all librarians and librarians to be!! :D (I especially liked the section she wrote on librarians wiping the floor with everyone on Trivia Night at the local pubs)

Joanne says

The author seems to find herself funnier than she actually is. *I Work At a Public Library* by Gina Sheridan is more on the mark and much more humorous. Also, Roz Warren is a librarian that admits to dog-earring books and advises patrons to do it also! Ackkk!

Sarah says

The chapters about funny things that happen in the author's library are good, though not as funny as I expected them to be, but I'm not particularly interested in the chapters about her life. I'm bothered that a book by and about librarians doesn't use the Oxford comma! It also lists titles of books in quotations, when grammar rules say they should be underlined or (preferably) italicized, and I've found several typos. Also, the unprofessional layout is distracting.

Jenn says

This is being passed around between staff.

My only real complaint is the formatting. It seems as though all they did was print the ebook edition, so margins and typeface are awkward and clunky. But the humor is still able to prevail. I keep shaking my head and thinking, yep i know those patrons. I would have liked it to be longer.

I need to write a humor book on teen librarianship.

Ann Santori says

Only wish it had been MUCH longer (seriously, I would have read a textbook size book of these essays) and that Ms. Warren's work would have been given a nicer publication treatment so the book would be more attractive on the shelf . . . matching its wonderful contents!

Peacegal says

It takes working in a library to understand what strange places they really are. Public libraries are places for folks who love the books and other materials and services a library offers, yes, but they're also a magnet for odd--from the harmlessly eccentric to the unnervingly unbalanced.

OUR SHELVES is a gentle, mildly humorous look at the goings-on at one library. I think I laughed once, when the author notes that if you cannot believe that a patron would argue that aliens stole his overdue book, you've never worked in a public library.

As the author still works at the library she writes about, she understandably doesn't get too dark or dishy. She doesn't delve into the sad and scary moments involving addiction and mental illness, or perhaps her library hasn't been hit as hard by these crises as have others. Frankly many librarians would welcome the run-of-the-mill public weirdness in the age of OD's in the restrooms.

I agree with the other reviewers who were annoyed by the author's constant use of "middle-aged women" to describe her fellow librarians. Even though I am, if not quite yet middle-aged, pretty close to it, it's silly to harp on this when people of all ages and genders work in libraries.

I am happy that the author is an ally for LGBT rights, a cause that in my experience seems to have passed by many others of her generation.

Mycala says

Roz is a librarian in the Philly area and she is hilarious. I learned about her because she will be coming to Baltimore in the near future so I put two of her books on hold. After a few weeks, I got this one. The other one is still waiting. The book is a compilation of stories about her experiences as a librarian. Any librarian

will nod their head and sometimes sigh, sometimes laugh. I, personally, was astonished and have new respect for librarians. I had at one point considered going for an MLS but it's clear that I lack the patience to deal with the sorts of people who frequent at least this particular branch (and she's in a rather swanky area so it has nothing to do with location.. just saying), so therefore probably... yeah this wouldn't be the job for me. I'm glad I get to read about her adventures though. Totally have Men Are From Detroit, Women Are From Paris on my to-read list.

Violet says

This was okay. Some pieces were relatable and made me smile, but others felt a little snarky towards patrons (it's a fine line) and although it may be true for the authors library, I got extremely tired of the "middle aged women" thing. I work in a library and a lot of us are young, and quite a few are male. I did however, really appreciate the piece on supporting GLBTQIA patrons. Worth a quick read.

Angela says

I really loved most of this book, it's very true to our librarian lives. I especially loved the game you can play for winning points when dealing with difficult patrons. I just wish she hadn't been so crass sometimes when it really wasn't needed. I would love to recommend this book to other librarian friends but it's really just for the liberal ones who don't mind people speaking their minds; not something I can tell my mom to read. Specifically, I don't think the nuns who saw the porn was such a good story, seems far fetched and not very nice.
