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Your Home Library: The Complete System For Organizing, Locating, Referencing, And Maintaining Your Book Collection



Synopsis

For the general book lover, someone whose ardor for the printed word has led to stacks of yet-to-be-read volumes on floors and other surfaces, here's a great, enjoyable way to keep track of them all. This comprehensive kit draws upon the expertise of one of the world's greatest libraries, the only facility of its kind with both world-class research and circulating collections. It includes a CD containing custom software to organize and record your book collection by title, author, subject, location on your bookshelf, and numerous additional useful categories. Also included are beautiful bookplates, an instruction manual, and an instructive volume on creating and organizing home libraries, written by an experience librarian. The 96-page book celebrates the myriad of joys of being a book lover, and addresses such issues as evaluating and organizing a collection, and keeping it in place with bookends and shelves; caring for books, and the art of loaning books that are actually returned.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

My main problem with this set is that the software, while simple and attractive to use for recording one's personal relationship with one's books (in addition to some standard cataloguing data, there are categories like how you acquired it, its physical condition, your rating of it, whether or not you've read it) and some practical details like which shelf number it's on and to whom you may have loaned it, just isn't powerful enough to solve the problem I bought it for, which is to make it possible for me to really search my collection effectively. To do this, I would like to record not only titles, but what

Kathie Coblenz calls "other access points", which could be the names of authors whose essays appear in a collection, for example. It's also the case that, while you may record several authors for a book, the search function will only find an author in the position in which you entered it, (so you may have to do several separate searches to find all the books on which a particular person's name is listed as author). So this won't save me the trouble of setting up my own database, as I had rather hoped it would. The book is more helpful, with sections on figuring out ways to group books together into categories, how much shelf space you need for each category, a system for numbering shelves so that you can use the software to know where in your collection to find them (more useful if you have the luxury of making these shelves be partially full, so that you just add books to existing space, rather than moving categories around when you add new bookshelves), preservation techniques, and tips for culling the collection. The largest piece in the set is the ring-binder with a number of landscape-oriented brown sheets of paper, for you to print out your booklist.

According to a recent New York Times article, Kathie Coblenz has a home library she estimates at 3,600 volumes packed into a one-bedroom apartment. As a special collection cataloger for the New York Public Library she has written the book portion of this set (software, book, and binder). Book cataloging software is an iffy proposition. My current collection (20,000+ volumes not counting 1,000+ of graphic novels) is on a computerized database. I tried many off-the shelf products and they all fail in one major aspect or another. Do you want to know what stories are in a particular collection? Do you want to know that the book crosses several genres? (a big thing in romances these days) Do you want ISBNs? searches capable of looking for primary, secondary, tertiary, etc. authors? M. Ahrens suggests software that adds data based on ISBN. But what about all of those books published before the ISBN became a standard in 1970? Value? Edition? Typeface? Binding? A collector is better off thinking about what they want to track in their collection and using a simple database program (Paradox, Access, etc.) or a configurable home inventory program. The binder is designed for printing out a copy of your book inventory (mine changes several times a week thus making a paper record short-lived and wasteful). It is a nice addition for a complete collection (say a complete collection of first editions of a favorite author) but inadequate for any active collection. The book is interesting but seems to apply to a perfect world. If you add to your collection, the idea of shelf numbering may not be something you want to have to keep updating in the database as books move from one shelf to another.

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