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ORIGAMI (736.98)

My parents weren't public library users. But they were always readers.

My Mom bought mystery stories in paperback editions by Mickey Spillane, Agatha Christie and Erle Stanley Gardner (fiction) and women's magazines like *Redbook* and *Ladies' Home Journal* (home economics 640; cookbooks 641.5; childrearing 649.1). My Dad studied technical manuals for cars (auto repair 629.287; cars 629.2) and other machinery (engineering 620).

She was a stay-at-home mother for much of my childhood, and he was a master mechanic for the LAPD.

We got *Reader's Digest* magazines in the mail, and my cousin (who lived with us and shared my bedroom) read gossip magazines, true romance magazines and true crime magazines.

The Bookmobile came to our school every other week, and my second and third grade teachers, Mr. Ochs and Mr. Hatfield, kept stacks of library materials in their classrooms for us to read.

We moved when I was in the fourth grade, and that's when I discovered that there was more information and entertainment in the world in one place than one person could ever digest (knowledge 001). I discovered the neighborhood library (libraries 020).

The Mark Twain Branch of the L.A. Public Library system was between Manchester Avenue Elementary School and Bret Harte Junior High and for six years I could stop by the library on the way home from school almost every day. I checked out piles of books besides the ones I read at the library.

I'd like to share with you a few things I learned at libraries over the years.

This is an origami crane (paper arts 745.54).

You can find out how to make one in the origami (736.98) section of the library. You can find out what they symbolize in the folklore (398) section. If you are interested in the life cycle of cranes (598), the Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Japanese history 952; world history 909) or how to do the "crane" yoga (613.7) position you will find that these things are all available to you at the library.

This is an origami owl.

In the West, owls are symbols of wisdom (western philosophy 180; oriental philosophy 181). They were the birds associated with the Greek goddess of wisdom and learning (knowledge 001). Pallas Athena sprang full-grown from the mind of Zeus.

If you are interested in owls (598.97), birdwatching (598.07234) or Greek mythology (292) you can also find that information at the library.

The Noyes Children's Library has an carved owl above the front door. If you have a child or grandchild, perhaps the two of you can come to the Noyes Library for Young Children this summer where I am doing a volunteer origami program. I may be able to teach you how to make this owl.

You can even find out about the Dewey Decimal System (025.431) at the library. It is one of the most logical ways to organize information that has existed in human history.

And if you have trouble finding any of these things on your own you can ask a librarian.

Steve Cisler (the late Apple Librarian) said that the Internet was "... like a library where somebody has taken all the books off the shelves, torn all their covers off, and then thrown them randomly on the floor."

Finding things on Google or other search engines is like stepping onto that floor and asking a random stranger for the book in his hand. As you and others cluster around that stranger his book rises in the search hierarchy, not because it is the best information but because it has become the most popular information.

Public libraries, on the other hand, are institutions that base their mission on being accurate, reliable, accessible, organized and unbiased. Even in the age of the Internet, they are crucial to the health of our County (public health 352.4; housing and public works 352.7).

Please do what you can to keep MCPL healthy. Libraries matter.

Thank you.

SOME OTHER THOUGHTS

AMBULANCE FEE - we could call it the EMT Insurance Recovery Act. Can we revisit this soon?

TAX BREAKS FOR CORPORATIONS (e.g. ~\$55 million for Marriott maybe ten years ago) Are these worthwhile? If we looked at past tax breaks that businesses in Montgomery County got, would we see that the amount of money that they brought into the County was worth that much or more? On the same topic, we shouldn't let corporations pit governments in the COG against one another on this sort of thing, because local governments bidding against each other to win the chance for a business to set up shop in their locality often act to the detriment of their citizens.

PARKING

According to some studies there are six parking spots per car in urban areas. This contributes to stream flooding, flash floods on roads, drainage problems in general, and pollution of the Chesapeake Bay. All of these things cost the County money. Perhaps the large, flat parking lots should be taxed at a higher rate. Perhaps there could be breaks for parking structures, and breaks for abatement procedures such as semipermeable surfaces that absorb water rather than letting it run off, bio-drainage, etc.

In addition, there shouldn't be subsidized parking for public employees or, as we move into the future, for users of government facilities. Subsidized parking encourages driving, which contributes to more high-density road use and traffic congestion. All cost us dearly— in cash or in quality of life. Some of the same studies show that if you don't subsidize parking people are more likely to carpool, vanpool or take public transportation.

COSTCO/LIVE NATION/AFI

Cash incentives to corporations like those proposed for Costco, like those which Live Nation and AFI (even though it is a nonprofit) have already been given should be generous loans. There is probably no sure return on investment with a gift.

TAX INCREASES

Renew the energy and cellphone taxes; don't let them expire. Consider increasing property taxes.

STRUCTURAL GOVERNMENT CHANGES

Combine functions when possible; eliminate as many layers of management as are reasonable; consider making structural changes in partnership with continuing or renewing taxes. Each can be adjusted as the other changes.

MOE

Consider campaigning harder to change the Maintenance of Effort laws, rather than campaigning each year to be excused from them.

If all of the departments, including schools, had line item budgets (see MOE above), departments would know how much they spend on what and be better able to judge efficiencies. Then it might be easier to combine functions between departments and reduce excess staffing, if there is excess staffing, and to do a cleaner job with fewer resources.

STATE SUPPORT FOR LIBRARIES

The State of Maryland has support for libraries, but the formula they use to determine how much each county gets shorts Montgomery County. It is possible that the level of people in need is not properly measured given the belief state-wide that Montgomery County is rich. Some of our demographics look different now.

Try not to give away County land. There are rules about the Friends of the Library (Montgomery County) selling withdrawn library books, but the rules for transferring County property to developers (for example, the Forest Glen Seminary) seem more lax.

Also, the rules for declaring schools excess also seem to sometimes favor non-County use of those buildings (Woodlin Elementary School).

Be wary of *The Cloud*. Moving services online instead of having them as part of bricks-and-mortar does not necessarily save money or time or provide better service. This is particularly true in the information management area. During the current time of reduced funding and procurement freezes, the rented information sources (like databases) are at risk, whereas print materials are still available. They are owned by MCPL.

eBooks may not be "permanent" collection materials. Harper-Collins, the book publisher, has announced that eBooks from their company will expire after 26 library checkouts.

Also, though the Cloud sounds like a gentle quiet place, it is actually a server farm or a series of server farms where companies who intend to make a profit rent out space on their computers. In some ways it is like asking a guy you heard was honest to keep your wallet in his garage for the next "n" years. You are depending on luck and the kindness of strangers.

FIJI BOOK FLOOD

In the early 1980's New Zealand was trying to increase the number of Fijian school children who spoke English. One of the most successful programs involved giving hundreds of high quality English language children's books to rural schools. After reading and being read to for the school year, it was found that the children in the Book Flood group progressed farther and retained more English than who were given the standard ESL training. An extra benefit was found in testing two years later; the Book Flood students were also better at expressing themselves in their native tongue.

"The most obvious step in improving reading is improving access to books"

— Stephen Krasken