

## Librarian by Day

Many people believe libraries are for the intellectual being. When a person walks into a library, he or she expects it to be serene. As they walk in, they expect to see tables filled with people studying or reading quietly, with endless shelves of books around. There should be one librarian, usually female, sitting behind the information desk with her face in a book, waiting for a patron to walk up to the desk and ask her a question. Usually, when people are asked to describe the typical librarian, they promptly answer, old woman, hair picked up in a crisp bun, spectacles, sensible shoes, and no life outside of the library. She is also the one with her index finger to her lips shushing patrons. In addition, common belief entails that librarians have an extremely easy job. People believe a librarian's job consists of sitting behind a desk all day with a computer, and answering patron's questions. My visit to Main Library in Downtown Miami proved the above-mentioned stereotypes about librarians to be very wrong.

I spoke to a librarian named Rebecca;\* she prefers to be called "Beck." She disproved everything I had heard on the streets about librarians. The main stereotypes she disproved were the physical aspect and not having a life outside of the library. Beck is a twenty-five year old librarian who just graduated from the University of Florida with a Master's Degree in Library Information Science. Her undergraduate degree was in Business Administration.

Rebecca is tall, with red hair; her family is from Holland, and she dresses in very trendy casual clothing. Beck does not like having her hair up in a bun, she says she likes the natural flow of her straight, red hair. Neither does she wear sensible shoes like most people picture librarians, nor is she an old woman.

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\* Names were changed to conceal the interviewee's identity.

Not only does Beck not fit the physical stereotype given to librarians, but she also does have a life outside of the library. When she is asked what she does for a living, she responds with “Librarian by day”. I asked, “What does that mean exactly?” and she made it clear that she loves the Miami nightlife. Her favorite nightclub is “The Kitchen”, which is a fetish club on Wednesday nights. Beck confessed to participating in “kinky activities” at this nightclub with her boyfriend of three years, Jim.

Beck also enjoys herself with friends and co-workers by going to bars. Her favorite bars are Fritz & Franz Bierhaus in Coral Gables, and Duffy’s Tavern in South Miami. Every Thursday night after work, Beck and a few co-workers (Librarians as well) go to Duffy’s Tavern and get “shitfaced drunk”. At least we know she is not the only librarian that knows how to party.

She told me about an incident when her and another librarian were at a house party and became so drunk, they could barely stand. They decided they wanted to go for a swim, but they did not have swimsuits. Beck said, “Screw it”, took off her clothes and jumped in the pool with her underwear. Kathy\*, the other librarian, did the same. Beck said that the all she remembered was being pulled out of the pool by a man named Rick and throwing up all over him.

For an entire day, I followed Beck around. I work at a library, and I have never noticed how hard librarians actually work. The first thing she told me was, “In order to become a librarian, you need a Master’s Degree in Library Information Science, without it, you don’t have a chance.” One year of library-related experience is also required, which can be achieved by internships. Many people are not aware that librarians require Master’s Degrees. They simply think anyone can become a librarian.

Another thing I noticed while following Beck around was that not everyone working in the Library is a librarian. There are other positions such as Library Pages and Library Assistants. Library Pages are the ones responsible for making sure the shelves

are stocked with books and that they are all in the correct order. Library Assistants usually work the check out desk. They are responsible for making sure nothing goes wrong with patron's records. They check in returned books, and check out books for the patrons. Library Assistants also hold books for patrons who request them. Librarians are the Library Pages' and the Library Assistants' supervisor. If anything goes wrong, a librarian is called to help find the solution to the problem; therefore; they have the greatest responsibility of all.

Librarians are also the ones responsible for what books are found in the library. On a daily basis, librarians are on-line or on the phone with publishers trying to find certain books. They need keep under a certain budget, which it set by the county. These books then need to be bar-coded so they can be checked out, and labeled correctly with a call number, so the patrons can have easy access to the books; librarians do this as well. Not only do them order books, but they also have to keep record of the books in library. This is called cataloging, and it is Beck's main duty aside from programming. When Beck is programming, she is running around the library like a chicken with its head cut off. She has to make sure every auditorium or meeting room is booked correctly and at the right time. If the people having a meeting need more tables or chairs, she has to find it for them. While I was visiting, Beck had accidentally scheduled two meetings at the same time in the same auditorium. She went through a great deal of trouble trying to find a place for the second group to have their meeting.

At the end of the day, Rebecca was exhausted. Her favorite way to unwind was to go get a drink. She asked me to join her, and I did. We went to Fritz & Franz Bierhaus, where Beck ordered "Das Boot." It's a big glass boot filled with what I believe is sixty ounces of beer. "What can I say" she said, "I like beer".

Contrary to popular belief, librarians work hard at the library, are not all condescending old women with no life outside of the library, and Rebecca is a perfect example of that.