



# Private Library Lending Guide

## Can You Find the Book You Want at Your Local Public Library? It may be time to start your own Private Lending Library

### Introduction

A recent discussion on the CORAC Education Helpline on Signal brought up an important developing issue in education: finding worthy books and preserving access to them. It seems that many libraries are no longer stocking good books and source materials. Here is the conversation, quoted with permission, followed by a guide for how to set up and run a private book lending library.

### Discussion

JH reported:

I received this email from a fellow homeschool parent, here in the Denver area, who runs a Co-op. I think it warrants reading:

"I have been teaching an IEW class for middle schoolers for the past four years now. I like history, so I have always chosen a history themed writing program, as I think it makes learning the writing process more interesting. Right now, the students are learning, in a very rudimentary fashion, how to write a research paper. They are given one source text, and are supposed to find two other texts in order to gather information and write a paragraph. The students are encouraged to use texts that are below their ability, as the point of the exercise is not the information itself, but the process of learning how to pull from multiple sources and then write one paragraph.

The first two years, there was no problem with this lesson. The students were able to go to the library and find books connected to the topic. Last year, I believe, was on the sinking of the Lusitania, and after multiple students reported back that they were unable to find books in the library on the subject, I let the students just find articles on the internet to do their assignment instead of books.

Because of this experience, I went to the library this afternoon to see if there were available books for the upcoming assignment. The students are supposed to find information from multiple sources on "King Richard the Lionheart." I typed it into the library search and came up with nothing.

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I asked the librarian for help and she too came up with nothing. I told her that any book on the Middle Ages in general would probably suffice as long as there was a section on King Richard in it. Since that too was coming up with nothing, I asked her to show me where the history section was and I would look there myself. Where she took me was so incredibly disturbing. I have no idea why she brought me here, but it was a section filled with books (for young children) with titles such as, A Kid's Book about Pride; A Kid's Book about Queer Mental Health; If You're a Kid Like Gavin (with rainbow colors); and The ABCs of Queer History. Then, there was: Call Me Miss Hamilton: One Woman's Case for Equality; History Comics: The Stonewall Riots; How to be a Global Citizen; We are the Change; Choosing Brave; and The Life and Death of Martin Luther King, Jr. And finally, in this section, A Black Woman Did That; Racism; Anti-Bigotry; This Book is Anti-Racism; and A Kid's Book about White Privilege. Umm. I was looking for the history section??

She then took me to a different section that was supposed to be the history area, and I had to take a picture just to show you all how painfully dismal our libraries are right now. One small section held the history books on 5 shelves that were 1/3 to a 1/2 empty. There were several books about Ancient Rome, several about knighthood, several books about pirates made the cut, and then, in this painfully small history section, here we go: Black Girls Unbossed; She Persisted Around the World; Women who Dared; The Girl who Rode a Shark (and other stories of daring women)- we needed two copies of this one; and Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls.

I came out of the library truly disturbed. Not even so much that there were books like the ones that I just mentioned. But more that there was so little else. This was practically all there was in the library. In sections like history, the only thing being offered are pirates or power girl stories. I wrote here about a year back that I wasn't sure what to do with my home library as my kids grew older. Do I slowly get rid of the younger material? Do I hang onto everything in case the grandkids need them? I am now convinced that I not only need to hold onto them, but I need to start building onto this library. All the books that I assumed "would be around" so it isn't a big deal if I don't own them... are not being around. I know we have been hearing about this and talking about the state of our libraries for years now, but going there today was a serious wakeup call for me. Hold onto your home libraries and keep investing in books because they are not in the public space anymore."

Another mom gave suggestions, which is also helpful!

"I find that in this area, as in many areas of life, it is the best of times and it is the worst of times. The physical public libraries are tragically part of the worst. It is heartbreaking that they cannot be trusted. Both for my kids and for myself professionally I have used the public libraries almost exclusively through online requests, (including Prospector) just running in to pick up the books from the reserve section.



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I love books, physical books! I too have been wondering what to do with all my books. I tend to look at them in three groups – 1) books I want to read again, 2) books I want to have for my children and grandchildren, and 3) books I don't think anyone should read. Since I have trouble destroying or throwing away books, these last are a problem. I wonder if we all need to form our own private library system. Could that be done? It would take a significant amount of time and space.

To the best of times – nearly any book, or for that matter other printed material, is now obtainable online. This fall I had to do a large research project regarding the connection between freedom of speech and taxation law during the colonial American period and the earlier development of these issues in England. (Very geeky stuff, but I love it.) Whereas in the past I would have had to go to New England and old England to have access to these materials, now I could get them online.

I know that this is too much for younger children, but older children (and all of us) need to learn the value of finding source materials. By that I mean, if you are studying John Adams you look first to his personal writings, and then to things written about him at the time that he was alive. You can now access collections of personal letters, colonial newspapers, royal proclamations, colonial legislative records. etc. online. As trust in mediators declines the ability to read the original documents is more important. In addition, librarians who are the custodians of such materials are usually delightful and happy to help anyone (esp. a student) who is trying to find something.

Many of these resources have options where you have to pay, but I was able to find everything I needed without buying any subscriptions. Some places to start if you are interested in finding source documents:

### General:

Prospector – <https://encore.coalliance.org/iii/encore/?lang=eng>

Library of Congress – <https://www.loc.gov/>

HeinOnline – <https://home.heinonline.org/>

### U.S. and Colonial:

Yale Law School's Avalon Project – <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/>

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History – <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/>

The Office of the Historian – <https://history.state.gov/>



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U.K and England:

The British Statutes Project – <https://statutes.org.uk/site/>

The Society of Antiquaries of London – <https://www.sal.org.uk/>

CM shared:

Full disclosure: I am a high school librarian with a MLS (Master of Library Science). Libraries have become a hotbed of liberal nuttiness but you can occasionally find more conservative librarians out there (we're dinosaurs but some of us still exist).

Most public libraries should have databases available for research from any device with internet access, free with a public library card. In addition to specialized databases, there's usually access to one or two online encyclopedias (Britannica, World Book and Grolier are the big 3). Gale is one of the biggest database publishers out there. Databases that cover a wide variety of general topics include Gale Academic OneFile, Gale General OneFile, and Gale OneFile: High School. If students are researching more of a debate topic, Gale has another database that I highly recommend called Opposing Viewpoints. Almost all of the databases out there today (definitely all of the Gale products) allow you to limit your search by the lexile number. The higher the lexile, the higher the reading level.

JH described a local homeschool private library:

Our homeschool group started a textbook/educational materials library for the whole group. We had a very homeschool[-friendly] priest at our Basilica and he opened a basement room to house this library. One mom has taken on the overseeing of it and generally collects books at our annual conference (where we also have a book sale). Unfortunately, the space has become crowded already and she can't continue to add.

But it made me wonder if other parishes would be willing to house a lending library? If there are many within a diocese, then it would solve space and ease of access.

And EL set up a library at her church:

I created a library at our parish about 10 years ago. I built an amazing room that feels like a front room, dining room and kitchen. I had other ministries in mind when designing the space. It is the Fr. Emil Kapaun Library. I cherish the older books that I have been able to get. I look at the space as an extension to the tabernacle, as a place to feel at home and surrounded by good books.

Must add: other than some history or comparative religion books, all are authentic Catholic writing. Not everyone makes it into this library...



## PRIVATE LIBRARY LENDING GUIDE

### 1. Planning and Logistics

- Planning and Logistics
- Goals, vision, your “Why?”
- Who will run the library? You, your family members, volunteers, etc.
- What size will the library be?
- Who will the patrons be? Friends and family, homeschooling co-op, your town...
- Safety or liability concerns...
- Library name and logo

### 2. Location and Set-up

- Options: team up with a community non-profit organization, existing library, local business, a church, or host privately at a home. Each option has advantages and disadvantages.
- Choose a secure location: a clean and dry shed, extra bedroom/room in a home, dry basement, etc.
- Set up shelves, table(s), chairs, check-out station, drop-box, etc.

### 3. Gather Books

- personal stock
- donations
- rummage/estate sales
- library book sales
- online: Craigslist, etc.
- post requests on social media groups

### 4. Catalog, Label and Shelf Books

- Choose book categories
  - Reference: some books should be set aside for on-site viewing instead of lending, especially those that would be difficult to replace.
  - Genres can be added as needed: Religion, Fiction, Nonfiction, Sci-Fi/Fantasy, Biography, Classics, Children’s Fiction, Picture Books, etc.
  - Colored dot stickers on bindings can be useful for ease of sorting/re-shelving
  - Print corresponding category labels for the shelves (make sure labels can be moved around as needed)



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- Choose cataloging system
  - physical card catalog: for example, here's a free printable library book card and pocket template: <https://www.classroomfreebies.com/2024/11/free-library-card-and-book-pocket-printable.html>
  - computerized database: (use at own risk; do your research) <https://www.sheetgo.com/blog/inventory-templates/inventory-lending-template-in-google-sheets/>
  - online or app-based database: iBookshelf, My Library, Book Crawler, BookBuddy, Librlish, Goodreads, or other library management apps: <https://www.techjockey.com/blog/best-open-source-free-library-management-software>
- Label books with necessary information
  - Library name and contact phone/email
  - Category for re-shelving
  - Author code

### 5. Policies and Procedures

- membership cost, late fees
- loan period and checkout procedure, book borrowing limit, late fees
- member responsibilities
- open hours/availability
- contact information for library owner/site
- member library cards, with member contact information, to keep on file

### 6. Adverstising

- create signage for on-site location and posters to distribute if desired
- concentrate efforts on intended members
- bulletin boards, community centers, social media local groups, churches

### 7. Maintenance

- remove damaged items
- update catalog as needed with new/removed/lost items
- communicate with site owners, volunteers as to needed changes

### 8. Other Options and Add-ons

- free items: box of books to give away, food pantry, sports gear, etc.
- "Library of Things" that would benefit people in your community (tools, games...)
- "Little Free Library" in an outside weather-proof book stand



## Private Library Lending Guide *(continued)*

### References:

- <https://thecardcataloglibrarians.com/the-card-catalog-database/what-is-a-private-living-books-lending-library-and-how-can-i-start-one>
- <https://www.communityworkshopllc.com/goodstuff/2021/3/10/how-to-lending-libraries>
- <https://www.wikihow.com/Start-a-Small-Library>

