

lifetime of learning: free for the asking

Barbara E. Scudder



This sign—in a branch of our local public library—reminds patrons that today's librarian is serious about the task of helping you in your self-education. The librarian only needs to know what your specific interest is to help you locate a wealth of material. First, as an elementary school librarian and later as a college reference librarian, I've discovered the excitement of "learn-it-yourself." Even the labyrinth of the large library need no longer be perplexing with the aid of an alert librarian. Will you join me on a quest that will take us to a number of resources designed to aid you in your personal pursuit of information and inspiration?

We'll Start with "Do-It-Yourself"

Our first question is: "What do I want to find out?" Let's suppose that in the wake of our Bicentennial you and I have become interested in collecting antique glassware. For an overview of the subject, we read an encyclopedia article or visit the children's room for a good juvenile book on the subject.

We next head for the card catalog where we find a number of titles beginning with the word "antique." There's a "see also" cross reference from "antiques" to "collectors and collecting." We'll also want to make a note of the materials listed under "antiques-directories" and "antiques-periodicals."

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Are you a fellow browser? If so, let's browse together through the books on the humanities shelves or in the case of many smaller libraries, the older Dewey decimal classification number 748. Let's also note any books on our subject in the "new books" display.

The Librarian: There To Be "Bothered"

If we haven't already asked for help, we'll now take our search to the reference librarian. We'll indicate where we've already looked and what has been most helpful. We probably now have specific questions to ask the librarian, who may well ask us questions that will help determine which are the best sources.

The librarian may suggest the *Guide to Reference Books* for a listing of dictionaries, encyclopedias, and directories dealing specifically with antiques. He/she may suggest one of the special guides to periodical literature—in this case, the *Art Index*. We note that it's used much like the familiar *Reader's Guide* which also indexes magazines with material on antiques. Checking the most recent volume, and working backwards by volume number, we find references under "antiques" and also under "glassware, American."

Where can we locate pictures of various types of antique glassware? The librarian may hand us *Index to Illustrations*, an index of selected books as well as a few periodicals. Let's also inquire if the library's vertical file contains clippings or pamphlets on antique glassware. Does the library have a picture file? Perhaps it has a "Who Knows What" file that would provide the name and address of a local collector of antique glassware.

There's something special about a new book and for some topics it's essential to have the most up-to-date material available. Perhaps the librarian knows of a book on our topic that's soon to be processed. He/she may also suggest that we fill out a reserve request form for a book that's out so we'll be notified when the book is returned.

What books on antique glassware are soon to be published? The *Subject Guide to Forthcoming Books* will be helpful here. If our proposed hobby becomes a long-term interest, we'll be eager for new information as soon as it becomes available.

Are non-book items available on our subject? A film or filmstrip, for example, may enrich our knowledge of antique glassware.

Beyond the Local Library

We're about to search the entries in the *Reader's Guide* when—what's this? *Access!* Here's an index we haven't seen

before. It doesn't duplicate material in the *Reader's Guide*. It **does** index *Antiques Journal*. We scan the introduction to understand the form of entries and locate further references. There are articles we'd like to read that are in periodicals not in our local library. We learn that the *Union List of Serials* for our area enables the librarian to request a photocopy of these articles through interlibrary loan at minimum cost. An area union catalog also enables the librarian to request specific books through interlibrary loan. We keep these resources in mind when we spot in the reference section such titles as *Guide to Special Issues and Indexes of Periodicals* and *Selected Guide to Make It, Fix It, Do-It-Yourself Books*.

We'll also keep alert for material about antique glassware in the newspapers and magazines we subscribe to. We may clip and keep such material in a file folder. The local volunteer center may also put us in touch with people who already collect antique glassware and are willing to share some of their know-how. With "how to" and idea information from our search, we may well be launching a hobby that will last a lifetime.

An Epilogue

If antique glassware isn't your thing, put the above resources to work to learn more about your particular interest area. However, if you're looking for inspiration for a new hobby or new ways to use your skills for the benefit of your family or community, read *Hidden Art*.

Whatever your interests, do discover anew the joy of learning and growing in your free public "classroom"! The tuition is your time, effort, and willingness to ask your librarian to help you; the "class schedule" is flexible to fit into your busy one!

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