

GETTING LOST IN THE LIBRARY

Every reader needs a good book.

by CASSIDY SHEARRER
photo by TIFFANY SCHMIDT

I don't get lost in a good book very often anymore. I get so frustrated when I pick out book after book that doesn't captivate me. So frustrated, in fact, that I often forget to turn in my library books. As the daughter of a librarian, that's pretty embarrassing. But I've been inspired to try again.

Recently, I babysat a child who claims he can't read. And while he's wrong, he is still learning. This future astronaut is an expert in Lego construction, loves to learn about how things work, and loves to be read to. His older brother gets lost in chapter books about Captain Underpants, but this easily-distracted kid was missing out on that getting-lost-in-a-good-book feeling.

I could relate more to the older brother. My whole childhood was spent in the stacks of Ellis (courtesy of my mom) or Daniel Boone Regional Library. Many of my early memories involve finding a quiet place and diving into a world of fairies, babysitters, or runaways.

But when I think back far enough, I remember being a kid who struggled with reading too. In first grade, I "read" behind a big book of poems, scowling at my teacher for assigning us the impossible task of turning alphabet soup into a story. I don't remember the day I learned to read, but I also don't remember most of first grade. At some point, the alphabet soup must have made sense, because all I remember is



American Girls escaping plantations, Laura listening to Pa's fiddle, and Claudia Kishi's personal landline ringing.

My appetite for new worlds was satiated in those library stacks. I can still remember the floorplan of the old Daniel Boone Regional Library; the flying French fries give me warm fuzzies.

I wanted that experience for this boy I was caring for, but I certainly didn't have some "O Captain! My Captain!" style lesson in mind. I was just trying to fill time on a Saturday afternoon. I figured we'd rent some movies and get another Captain Underpants book. And we did those things. But we also checked out "Professor Astro Cat's Atomic Adventure."

Wow. This kiddo may be a cautious reader, but Professor Astro Cat was just his style. It was a beautifully illustrated book of amazing facts and science. The library gods (AKA actual librarians — hi Mom!) had smiled upon him. He settled into a cartoony Swedish lounge chair in Daniel Boone Regional Library's children's section and drank in the book with his eyes. For the next few days, the future astronaut was clearly "lost in a good book." Later, when he asked to be read some of the harder sections, he wasn't frustrated.

As a reader, it's easy to get frustrated and want to go play with our Legos. But there is a book out there for everyone. Do you need a "Professor Astro Cat" in your life? Or at least a trip to the library? 📖